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DANTE IN MODERN FLORENCE

MARY E. LACY

1 Florence — Descr.

2 Name (Dante —)

WITH DANTE IN MODERN FLORENCE

Photo: Alinari.

STATUE OF DANTE, BY DEMI, LOGGIE OF THE UFFIZI.

WITH DANTE IN MODERN FLORENCE

By MARY E. LACY

WITH TWENTY-EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
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TO

L. H

"LA MIA AMICA"

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

"Tu se' lo mio maestro e lo mio autore."

DANTE.

"I follow here the footing of thy feete
That with thy meaning so I may the rather meete."

EDMUND SPENSER.

PREFACE

"I made pilgrimage to the Land of Heart's Desire."
E. HUTTON.

"Un voyage dans les lieux où Dante a veçu, est une perpetuelle illustration de son poème."—AMPÈRE.

IT must be confessed that there is something slightly disappointing to the Dante lover at first sight in the aspect of modern Florence. He has journeyed thither as a pilgrim, hoping to discover for himself the City that the Poet so dearly loved and so passionately hated, and he is at once confronted with buildings that did not exist, at least in their present form, in the thirteenth century, with works of art that Dante never saw, and with streets through which by no possibility he could have passed. Spread out before his eyes, and visible to his most casual glance, lies the Florence of the Medicean period, the Florence of the Decadence, and the Florence of United Italy. The City is still so beautiful in spite of the many changes

it has known, that he feels inclined to re-echo the words of the Emperor Charles, quoted by Isaac Walton, and say that it is "too pleasant to be looked upon but only on holidays," but it is not the City he came to see, not the City where the greatest of Florentines was born.

It will take some time to learn that the Florence of to-day is in reality a palimpsest; that under the writing of later scribes lies the original manuscript; that if he will be at pains to search for traces of the Divine Poet they may be found, even though six centuries have come and gone since he passed away into exile.

The object of this little book is to help the reader to re-construct as far as may be the Florence of Dante, and to gather together whatever is still left in the City that will serve to throw light either on the *Divina Commedia* or on the history of the Author. In the last chapter an account will be found of the manner in which Florence Repentant has sought—all too late—to reconcile herself to the son who, while living, she so ruthlessly thrust out into the cold world, that lay "fuori," beyond his birthplace.

MARY E. LACY.

January 31st, 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

"Florence is the daughter of Rome and Etruria: the 'Sons of God' having—as in so many other instances in the course of this world's history—wedded the 'daughters of men.'"

BEFORE beginning the task set before us it would be well in the first instance to devote our attention to what Dante has to say concerning the origin of his native City, and then, taking the *Divina Commedia* for guide, make a slight sketch of her history down to the middle of the thirteenth century.

In no part of his writings does the Poet describe in so many words the founding of Florence, but in the *Convito* he speaks of her as "la bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma" —the most beautiful and famous of the many daughters of Rome; and it is evident from other passages in his works that he loved to regard her as an offshoot from the great Mistress of the World. This is not to be wondered at when we remember in what high estimation the writer

of the *Commedia* held Ancient Rome, how he looked upon her as an antitype of that Eternal City where the earthly head of the Church of God was afterwards to be enthroned, nay more, that he beheld in her a symbol of Paradise itself. He believed Aeneas—by reason of the position he occupied as father of the Roman people—to have been worthy, like St. Paul, of a special revelation,[1] spoke of Heaven as that "Rome where Christ Himself is Roman,"[2] and did not hesitate to apply to the Crucified Saviour the title of "Sommo Giove,"[3] supreme Jove. It is Virgil, the Poet of the Empire, who leads him tenderly through the gloomy circles of Hell, and the "milder shades of Purgatory," never quitting his side, until amid the glories of the earthly Eden, human understanding gives place to Divine Wisdom, and Beatrice herself appears before his longing eyes.

Dante wished with all his heart that primitive Florence had been wholly peopled by colonists from the banks of the Tiber, but he was obliged reluctantly to confess that this was not so, and that a portion of her population came to her from Fiesole, that town which—sadly diminished in size and importance—still clings to a hillside

[1] *Inf.* ii. 13. [2] *Purg.* xxxii. 102.
[3] *Ibid.* vi. 118.

Photo: Alinari.

FLORENCE AS SEEN FROM SAN MINIATO AL MONTE. "COSI DOLCE OSTELLO."

three miles to the north of the spot now occupied by her great descendant. There can be no doubt that the Poet was right in his surmise, and that Rome and Etruria joined hands together in the making of Florence. The natives of Fiesole, that ungrateful and malignant people —"quell' ingrato popolo maligno,"[1]—descended to the riverside for purposes of trade in very early times, and on the site where the City of Flowers was in the future to stand, established a small settlement. After the conquest of Fiesole by the Romans about two centuries before Christ, the dominant race refounded Florence, or "Florentia," as they named it, and it was inhabited both by Fiesolans and Romans. To this "confusion of persons," the admixture of barbaric blood with the "sementa santa"[2]—the holy seed of Rome—Dante ascribes most of the misfortunes from which the City suffered during his lifetime.

No very clear trace is left in modern Florence of the handiwork of either nation—there is no Porta Augusta as at Perugia, no great Arena as at Verona. Still we are aware, from the result of recent excavations, that the Romans fixed the centre of their rule on the site of what was once Mercato Vecchio, and there built Forum and

[1] *Inf.* xv. 61. [2] *Ibid.* xv. 76.

Capitol—and fragments have been found in various parts of the town, of theatres, a temple of Isis, baths and walls. Moreover, there is good reason to believe that the famous Baptistery, so closely associated with the memory of Dante, either stands on the site of a temple dedicated to Mars—who is alluded to in the *Inferno* as the first patron of the City[1] —or contains within itself the shell of that temple. Of the Etruscans—a curious people, who have gone out into the darkness, leaving behind them a legacy of rock-hewn tombs, indecipherable inscriptions, and works of art for the most part more grotesque than beautiful —even less remains. In the Museo Archeologico, Via della Colonna, may be seen, however, a collection of tombstones and other relics that tell of their occupation of the City.

No reference is to be found in the *Commedia* to that very important event, the introduction of Christianity into Florence; but it is certain that by the time of the Emperor Decius, at latest, some of her citizens had relinquished the worship of the "false and lying gods"—"gli dei falsi e bugiardi."[2] Many and great were the vicissitudes through which the little town on

[1] *Inf.* xiii. 143. [2] *Ibid.* i. 72.

the banks of the Arno passed during the first few centuries of her existence. She appears to have been reduced to misery more than once by invaders from the North—one of these incursions being alluded to by Dante. Totila, in the middle of the sixth century, is said to have almost destroyed her, and the Poet evidently had this event in mind when he speaks in the thirteenth Canto of the *Inferno* of the rebuilding of her walls on the ashes left by *Attila*,[1] as through some confusion common to himself and the chronicler Villani, he misnames the Gothic King. For a period of about three hundred and fifty years, as is supposed, after her conquest by Totila, Florence remained in a more or less desolate and ruinous condition, having sunk so low that she became a mere suburb to Dante's despised Fiesole.

To "Carlo Magno"—Charlemagne,[2] that sovereign of romance, whose soul in the *Paradiso* finds an honoured place in the heaven of Mars—in company with Joshua, Godfrey de Bouillon, and other heroic warriors, Florence is believed to owe a deep debt of gratitude. He twice spent some time within her boundaries, extended her Contado—the portion of the surrounding country over which she bore rule—

[1] *Inf.* xiii. 149. [2] *Par.* xviii. 43.

to a radius of three miles from the Baptistery, and gave such an impulse to the rebuilding and beautifying of the City that he may almost be regarded as her second founder. The Church of the Santissimi Apostoli was originally built by him—a fact commemorated on the present façade, and, according to a legend that must surely have delighted the Poet, the famous Paladin Orlando, at a time long previous to "la dolorosa rotta,"[1] the fatal rout of Fontarabia, was present at the ceremony of the consecration.

After the arrival of the Franks in Italy Florence became part of the Marquisate of Tuscany, and from this time forward her prosperity was assured. Her position on the Flaminian Road—that great highway which crossed Northern Italy to Rome—favoured her commerce; German Emperors on their way to be crowned by the Vicars of Christ lodged in her palaces; while, on the other hand, the Popes occasionally found in her a very desirable place of refuge when the turbulence of their subjects drove them out of the Eternal City. Hugh the Great and the famous Countess Matelda, who each in their turn held the marquisate of Tuscany,

[1] *Inf.* xxxi. 16.

have left very fragrant memories in Florence, and both of them are intimately associated with passages in the *Divina Commedia.*

To the former Dante makes allusion in the sixteenth Canto of the *Paradiso*, where he speaks—

> "Del gran barone, il cui nome e il cui pregio
> La festa da Tommaso riconforta."[1]

The "Great Baron," Hugh or Ugo of Brandenburgh, had in his youth been guilty of gross licentiousness, but was suddenly converted by means of a strange vision he witnessed while hunting in the Mugello, that large tract of broken country that extended almost up to the gates of Florence. In a rocky and sequestered spot he saw before him a scene of horror, and beheld black demons tormenting the souls of the damned. This awful spectacle left him a changed man, he at once amended his life, and in token of repentance built seven Benedictine Convents, in expiation of the Seven Deadly Sins.

After his conversion he spent many years in the City as Vicar of the Emperor Otho III., ruling wisely and well, and gaining the love and respect of all men. Not a few of the noble

[1] *Par.* xvi. 128.

families of Florence in Dante's time were proud to believe that they derived "milizia e privilegio"[1] —knighthood and dignity—from the famous Marquis. He passed away in the year 1006, and until quite recently it was customary on the Feast of St. Thomas, the anniversary of his death, to commemorate him in the Church of the Badia, some young nobleman, specially chosen for the purpose, declaiming his praises during the celebration of the Mass.

The Badia, a Benedictine Abbey, dedicated to St. Stephen, had been founded by Willa, Ugo of Brandenburgh's mother, and greatly enriched by Ugo himself. It was reconstructed by Arnolfo del Cambio in 1285, but of the work of the renowned architect only the termination of the choir remains, as it was almost wholly rebuilt in the seventeenth century. The monument of the Marquis, set up by the monks in the year 1431, from the design of Mino da Fiesole, still stands in the south transept. The effigy of "il gran barone"—a beautiful figure, peacefully awaiting the advent of that Day of Reckoning, which he is believed to have dreaded so intensely while on earth—lies in an arched recess, under the image of Madonna and Child.

The Poet refers to the Badia when he would

[1] *Par.* xvi. 130.

indicate the narrow limits of the "Ancient Circle" of Cacciaguida, the church being situated on the old wall of the City.

> "Fiorenza, dentro dalla cerchia antica,
> Ond'ella toglie ancora e terza e nona,
> Si stava in pace, sobria e pudica."[1]

It was from the Campanile of the Badia, a Campanile pulled down in the year 1307 because the Abbot refused to pay his taxes, that the canonical hours, "Terce and Nones," were rung in the age of Dante, and the sound of the bell must of necessity have been familiar to him from the time of his earliest infancy, as he lived almost under the shadow of the church.

In the year 1052 the "Comitessa" Matelda was associated with her mother, Beatrice, in the government of Tuscany, after the assassination of her father, Bonifazio III., and in 1076 she became sole ruler. Under her fostering care Florentine commerce and industries rapidly increased, and the citizens attained to a greater measure of liberty than they had ever enjoyed. As in the case of Ugo of Brandenburgh "Le Laude di Matelda" were long sung in the churches of Florence, and parents named their little daughters "Tessa" or "Contessa," in

[1] *Par.* xv. 97.

honour of the great Countess. It is possible that the undoubted benefits Matelda bestowed on his native town, is the reason why Dante, who could not but be opposed to her political views, transforms her in the *Commedia* into that delightful figure, the Lady of the Earthly Paradise,[1] who stands as type of the active life of the soul, as Beatrice does of the contemplative.

With the later years of Matelda's rule we touch the period that the Poet evidently regarded as the golden age of Florence, the time when his great ancestor, Cacciaguida, was alive. Cacciaguida[2] was born in all probability about the year 1090, he meets Dante in the Heaven of Mars, and discourses at great length on the condition of the City in his day, comparing it very favourably to what it had become by the close of the thirteenth century. He tells his descendant how small was that City,[3] how sober, chaste and peaceful, and draws for him a wonderful picture of the simplicity of the citizens, their plain food and dress, and the small importance they attached to pomp and worldly display.

After the age of Cacciaguida Florence increased rapidly in size and importance, and

[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 40. [2] *Par.* xv. 135. [3] *Ibid.* xv. 97.

became to all intents and purposes a free and independent state. She captured and destroyed Fiesole, and took possession of the castles of the nobility in the neighbourhood of the City, pulling down these robber strongholds, and thus greatly increasing the size of her Contado. By an act of very doubtful policy, in the year 1113, she compelled the dispossessed owners of the castles to come into the town, where little by little they contrived to get the government into their own hands.

Sixty years later the first feud took place between the descendants of the new-comers, the Grandi or nobles, and the Popolani or trading class, who represented the original burghers of Florence, and after this date for a space of about a century and a half the historians of the City are chiefly called upon to fill their pages with details of the perpetual struggle of these two factions for pre-eminence. The Popolani banded themselves together into Guilds, or "Arti," as they were called, corporations made up of merchants and workpeople engaged in the same kind of trade. These "Arti" soon became very rich and powerful, and threatened to undermine the rule of the Grandi. To protect themselves from the encroachments of the Popolani the Florentine nobles formed organizations called "Societe delle

Torri"—Societies of the Towers—so named from the tall fortified towers that adjoined the Palazzi in which they dwelt.

This state of things was bad enough in itself, but soon after the beginning of the thirteenth century a fresh element of discord appeared, that fanned into flames the smouldering ashes of civic hatred. By this period nearly all the northern cities of Italy had become divided into two definite political parties, to which the titles of Guelph and Ghibelline were applied, the first siding with the Pope, the second with the Emperor. Until the year 1215 Florence held herself aloof from taking any active part in the contest that was raging around her, but at this time a terrible event happened which, according to both Dante and Villani, at once brought her into the thickest of the fray.

Buondelmonte degli Buondelmonti,[1] a young nobleman of Florence, came of a family who, after the destruction of their castle of Montebuoni in Val di Greve, had been driven into the City. From political motives he had agreed to marry a daughter of the Amidei, but unfortunately for himself and his fellow citizens, he broke his troth, and announced his intention of wedding, at the instigation of her mother

[1] *Par.* xvi. 140.

Gualdrada, a very beautiful girl, Ciulla Donati. This breach of faith naturally gave great offence to the proud family to whom he should have been allied, and the Amidei consulted with their friends and kinsmen, and determined to exact the utmost vengeance for the insult. As the young bridegroom, dressed in white and mounted on a white palfry, all unsuspecting, rode across Ponte Vecchio, on the morning of the "Easter of the Resurrection," his wedding day, on his way to the Palazzi of the Buondelmonti in Borgo Santissimi Apostoli, they set upon him and stabbed him to death. His body was carried through Florence on a bier, his girl-wife supporting the head of her dead lord, and it is not difficult to imagine the impression this awful deed left on the minds of all men.

Still it seems a very extraordinary circumstance that what was after all only an act of private revenge should serve to embroil the entire City. This was, however, the case, for each of the seventy-two noble families at that time resident in Florence took part in the quarrel, and thus the aristocracy became divided into two opposing camps. Thirty-nine of these families espoused the cause of the Buondelmonti, while the rest banded themselves together under the leadership of the Uberti, the first calling

themselves Guelphs, the second, Ghibellines. Nor was this most unhappy state of affairs of short duration, for when at the battle of Montaperti forty-five years later, the famous Farinata degli Uberti carried off as prisoner a certain Cece degli Buondelmonti, he was pursued by his own brother Piero, who, unable to bear the idea of the survival of a member of the rival faction, deliberately killed the captive with repeated blows of a club.

In process of time the political significance of Guelph and Ghibelline was very much forgotten, and the old names simply served to indicate, in all civic questions, the party of progress and the party of reaction. In the first place, the older houses were almost invariably Ghibelline, the richer burgher class being commonly Guelph, but this distinction tended to become obliterated later, when branches of the same family often belonged to the rival parties in the State.

Having first sought out the origin of Florence, an origin almost hidden in the mists of antiquity, and then traced the history of her development down to the age that witnessed the birth of Dante, it is now possible to consider her condition at the time when the Poet dwelt within her walls.

Photo: Alinari.

PONTE VECCHIO. "IL PONTE."

CHAPTER I

THE CITY OF THE POET

"The first requisite to happiness is that a man be born in a famous city."—PLUTARCH.

"This city of warm brick with its churches of marble, and its palaces of stone, comes in time to hold for us all our dreams, all the unattainable things in the world."—E. HUTTON.

THE first thing to remember when we think of the age of Dante, is that it is an age of transition. For a period of at least four hundred years Florence had been developing apace, but by the time that the Poet was passing out of childhood the tide of progress in his native City had become mingled with the rising flood of the Renaissance, and many and great were the changes that had come to pass there before his death. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the "dolce ostello,"[1] the "sweet hostel" that Cacciaguida loved so well, differed very little more from the Florence into which Dante was born in the year 1265, than the Florence of the first half of the

[1] *Par.* xv. 132.

fourteenth century differed from the city of his birth.

A new spirit was abroad in Italy and elsewhere, making itself felt in every department of human life. A devotion to the art and literature of classic times, a love of beauty for its own sake, a sense that it was worth while to make the most of the passing hour—all these things combined to revolutionize the thought of the age in which Dante's lot was cast. The writer of the *Divina Commedia* was himself profoundly influenced by the new spirit, although he regretted certain evils that seemed inseparable from it, and his works must of necessity have been so much the poorer, if they had been composed at any less splendid epoch in the history of mankind. The mystical marriage of Faust and Helen of Troy—the wedding of the Middle Ages with the Ancient World—and the birth of their son, "Euphorion"—the Renaissance—was surely accomplished during the wonderful years that Dante walked this earth.

The Florence of the Poet's infancy was still surrounded by the "Cerchia Antica,"[1] of which Cacciaguida speaks—the ancient circuit of walls that had been built about the year 1078, during the rule of Matelda, taking the place of the

[1] *Par.* xv. 97.

original enceinte of the City, as planned, according to tradition, by Charlemagne. This "Cerchia Antica" extended from the Arno on the south to a little beyond the Baptistery on the north, and from San Piero on the east to San Pancrazio on the west. Visitors to Florence at the present day will best realize how small was the space included in it, by noting that the ground where stand so many of the more remarkable buildings of the City—for example, the Churches of Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, and the Annunziata, and the Convent of San Marco—was as yet "fuori le muri," outside the walls.

The earlier town had been divided into Quarters, named after the four principal gates that led out into the country at the points of the compass—Porta San Pancrazio, Porta del Duomo, Porta San Piero Maggiore, and Porta Santa Maria. After the reconstruction of the walls the Quarters were replaced by Sestieri—the Quarter of Santa Maria being divided into the Sestieri of Porta San Piero Scheraggio, and Borgo Santissimi Apostoli—Sestiere d'Oltrarno being added, though as yet it was wholly unfortified.

It is believed that towards the close of the thirteenth century the inhabitants of Florence

numbered about ninety thousand, and even though a certain proportion of her population dwelt in the suburbs that clustered around her, still the pressure in the City itself must have been very great. This being the case, Arnolfo del Cambio, a famous architect, was commissioned by the authorities to enlarge her boundaries. He began his undertaking in the year 1284, and it was approaching completion at the time that Dante left Florence. The area shut in by the new walls was three times as large as that contained in the "Cerchia Antica" —a great part of Oltrarno being included in it. This third circuit survived with but small alteration until recent days, but unfortunately, during the brief period that Florence was the Capital of United Italy, it was almost wholly swept away, and replaced by new and uninteresting "Viali," or boulevards, that still, however, serve to mark the limits of the later mediaeval City.

We will now think of the gateways by which the Florence of the Poet was entered, to two of which he makes allusion in the *Commedia*. One of these was at all times a mere postern—the Porta del Pera, or Peruzza,[1] named, as he himself implies, from the Peruzzi family, who

[1] *Par.* xvi. 126.

inhabited a neighbouring Piazza, and whose coat of arms, charged with six pears, is still to be seen on some of the houses in the vicinity. They were noble citizens and bankers, and partners with the Bardi—the family into which Beatrice Portinari married. The postern itself has long vanished, but Augustus Hare informs us that "on one side of the Palazzo Cocchi, at the corner of Piazza Santa Croce, is a huge hinge, a remnant of the Porta del Pera."

In the same Canto of the *Paradiso*, Dante refers to the gateway of his own Sestiere, the Porta San Piero,[1] of which no trace remains. Hard by it in his day were the houses of the Cerchi—"novi homines," or nouveaux riches—a low-born family, who had insinuated themselves into public affairs, and who Dante believed to be partly responsible for the division of the Guelph party into the hostile factions of Bianchi and Neri. He speaks of the actual gateway as being weighed down by "nuova fellonia"—new treachery—from the proximity of the spot it occupied, a portion of the space where now stands Piazza San Piero Maggiore, to the Palazzi of the Cerchi.

The three other gateways associated with the original Quarters of the City have long

[1] *Par.* xvi. 94.

ceased to exist, and in all probability it would be hard to locate exactly the position of Porta del Duomo and Porta San Pancrazio—both of which were doubtless destroyed soon after the extension of the walls had rendered them useless. Porta Santa Maria, the last of the four important gateways, is still, however, commemorated by the Via Por Santa Maria, the street that connects Ponte Vecchio with the Mercato Nuovo, and it is well that this should be so, for it has a peculiar claim to remembrance. Not only was it the early "Porta Romana" of the City, the point of departure for Ancient and Papal Rome, but within the archway formerly hung the "Martinella," or war-bell of Florence, that for thirty days and nights before a campaign tolled continually "for greatness of mind"—as an old chronicler assures us—"that the enemy might have full time to prepare himself." Dante speaks of the ringing of bells in the twenty-second Canto of the *Inferno*,[1] and doubtless the Martinella sounded its warning note before the commencement of that war with Pisa and Arezzo, of which Campaldino, the battle where he himself probably fought, was the most important engagement.

[1] *Inf.* xxii. 7.

New gateways were rendered necessary by the building of the third circuit of walls, and three of these—Porta al Prato, Porta San Gallo, and Porta alla Croce—were built by Arnolfo. Close to the Cascine Gardens still stands a solitary tower, a remnant of the old Porta al Prato—Porta San Gallo was rebuilt in the eighteenth century, while Porta alla Croce still stands in the modern Piazza Beccaria.

We can now go down to the Arno, that river which Dante, according to his mood of the moment, calls alternately the beautiful stream —"il bel fiume"[1]—and the cursed and luckless ditch—"la maladetta e sventurata fossa,"[2] —whose waters all unchanged, yet flow through the City, transparently green in fine weather, brown and turbid in time of flood. Four bridges spanned the banks in the age of the Poet, just as at the present day, the Ponte Vecchio being at that time by far the most ancient, for, if not the original bridge built by the Romans, it was at least an early successor to it. Dante speaks of Ponte Vecchio—the Old Bridge—as "Passo d'Arno"[3] and "Il ponte"[4]—in both cases with regard to a mutilated stone—"pietra scema"—the scanty remains of an equestrian

[1] *Inf.* xxiii. 95.
[2] *Inf.* xiii. 146.
[3] *Purg.* xiv. 51.
[4] *Par.* xvi. 146.

statue of the god Mars, tutelary deity of Roman Florentia, that in pre-Christian days had stood in the Temple on the site of the Baptistery. Later on it had been placed on the north bank of the river, close to the bridge, probably on the side of the modern Lungarno Acciaiuoli, and appears to have been regarded as the palladium of Florence. At the foot of this statue the murder of the young Buondelmonte had taken place, as if—as the Poet suggests—the unhappy youth had been offered in sacrifice to Mars in the last hour of the peace of the City.

> "Ma conveniasi a quella pietra scema
> Che guarda 'l ponte, che Fiorenza fesse
> Vittima nella sua pace postrema."[1]

Several buildings that are of interest in connection with this grim tragedy still stand in the neighbourhood of Ponte Vecchio. At the entrance of the Borgo Santissimi Apostoli is the Tower of the Amidei family, a double tower, with rude heads of lions on the second stage; while not far off, in Via delle Terme, is the Buondelmonti tower, tall and stately, in spite of the passage of so many centuries. In Via Lambertesca, also within a stone's throw of the Old Bridge, is a third tower, that of

[1] *Par.* xvi. 147.

Palazzo Lambertesca, which yet preserves the memory of Mosca degli Lamberti,[1] the man who, when the Amidei were assembled together after Buondelmonte's breach of faith, gave vent to the famous saying, "Cosa fatta, capo ha"—"the deed once done there is an end"—thus advising the death of the traitor. As the penalty of this cruel speech he is placed, a miserable figure, handless and with bleeding wrists, among the Givers of evil council in the ninth Bolgia of the *Inferno*.

In the Church of San Stefano, to the right of Via Por Santa Maria, the conspirators attended Mass on that fatal Easter morning—a strange prelude, one cannot but feel, to the perpetration of a deed of blood, yet curiously characteristic of the Middle Ages. The interior of the church has been wholly modernized, but the façade is as yet untouched, and over the door is suspended a horseshoe said to have come from the white palfry ridden by Buondelmonte. The bridge and image were alike swept away by a disastrous flood in the year 1333, and the present quaint and delightful structure was built about thirty years later by Taddeo Gaddi, better known as a painter than an architect.

[1] *Inf.* xxviii. 106.

Ponte alla Carraie, or Ponte Nuovo, as it was formerly called, the westermost of the four bridges, was erected in 1218, on account of the increase of the silk and wool industry in Borgo Ognissanti. It was originally constructed of wood, and this fact gave rise to a terrible accident a few months after Dante had been proclaimed an exile, for the bridge broke down under the weight of the crowds that had assembled to witness a mystery play, enacted in boats on the river, and many Florentines were drowned or seriously injured. They had been invited to behold a spectacle of the world that lay behind the visible, and not a few of them went in person to the reality of which the show was a shadow.

Ponte Rubaconte, now Ponte alle Grazie, lying to the east of Ponte Vecchio, possesses a double interest for all Dantists, for not only is it the only existing bridge on which the feet of the Poet could have trod, but it has also the honour of being mentioned in the *Commedia*. It was built by Lapo—father of Arnolfo di Lapi, the architect of the Bargello—in 1235, for Rubaconte da Mandella, a Milanese Podestà, during whose term of office the streets of the town were paved. Dante, in the *Purgatorio*, compares the ascent to the "Cornice" of the

Photo: Alinari.

VIEW OF PONTE ALLE GRAZIE (RUBACONTE), AND SAN MINIATO AL MONTE.

Envious from that of the Proud to the foot-staircase, which, built in the thirteenth century, still connects this bridge with the hill where San Miniato stands.

> "Come a man destra per salire al monte,
> Dove siede la chiesa, che soggioga
> La ben guidata sopra Rubaconte."[1]

It was formerly fringed with houses like Ponte Vecchio, but in 1874 they were removed, when the bridge was altered and widened. The more recent name, "Ponte alle Grazie," comes from an image of the Virgin at one time preserved in a little chapel on the right bank of the river.

Ponte Rubaconte was the scene of the reconciliation effected between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines in 1273 in the presence of Pope Gregory X., Charles of Anjou, and the Emperor Baldwin of Constantinople, the child Dante being then old enough to take some interest in this solemn farce that had no permanent effect whatever on the feuds of the City. The fourth bridge—Ponte Santa Trinità, also of wood—was built by Lamberto de Frescobaldi in 1252. Both it and Ponte alla Carraie were destroyed in the same flood that overwhelmed Ponte Vecchio, and not rebuilt until the period

[1] *Purg.* xii. 100.

of the Medicean rule in Florence. The construction of these three bridges during the short space of thirty-five years in the thirteenth century bears witness to the growing importance of Oltrarno, that in Dante's day had begun to rival the northern half of the City in size.

We have now traced the bounds of the Florence of Dante, and counted her gates and bridges. It would be well to go in spirit into her streets—those streets through which the Poet walked on his way to church or council chamber; those streets through which Beatrice Portinari passed, "crowned and clothed with humility"—"coronata e vestita d'umiltà"[1]—and attended by "a company of gentle ladies, a little older than herself." It is pleasant to be able to remember in this connection that a great many of the streets of the early City are still in existence, though of course for the most part altered and modernized, and that some actually bear the name by which they were originally designated. The visitor to that quarter of Florence, that lies south of the Duomo, between the Bargello and Or San Michele, will find an abundance of narrow ways, and even a tiny Piazza or two, that

[1] *V. N.* xxvi.

preserve almost unchanged their mediaeval characteristics.

How narrow were certain at least of the streets of Dante's City may be guessed from a story related by Franco Sachetti, the novelist. The Poet, then a person of some civic importance, had been asked to intercede with the Esecutore di Giustizia, an officer who appears to have watched over the minor morals of the citizens, on behalf of a youth of the Adimari family, who had got into trouble through insolent behaviour. He set out willingly enough on his errand, but on the way he began to think of the conduct of this young man, and how when he passed on horseback through Florence he was in the habit of stretching out his legs so widely that the toes of his boots touched the passers-by, and that those who by ill luck encountered him, were obliged in some cases even to turn back and seek another route. So angry had Dante become in the course of his meditations by the way, that on his arrival at the office of the Esecutore he related to him the manner in which the culprit "usurped the rights of the Commonwealth," and thus instead of palliating his original offence, secured for him a severer penalty than would otherwise have been inflicted. As we

can easily imagine, this incident did not endear the Poet to the members of the house of the Adimari, and indeed it is said to have been one of the causes of his banishment from the City a few years later.

Sheer up from the streets in true mediaeval fashion uprose a multitude of towers, belonging to the noble families of Florence. When Dante, in the thirty-first Canto of the *Inferno*, describes how, bewildered by the dim light that prevailed in the lowest circle of Hell, he mistook the giants that stood round Lucifer for "Alte torri"[1]—towers of great height—he may have had in mind almost any town in Tuscany as seen after sunset. In his native place, however, greater importance appears to have been attached to these towers than anywhere else, for the possession of one of them served as a patent of nobility. The associations of "Grandi," formed to resist the upward movement of the "Popolani," were named "Societe delle Torri," and the expression used in common speech to signify houses of distinction was "Famiglie di Torri e Loggie," the latter being open-air porches where festivities were held.

At one period certain of these towers were no less than 270 feet high, but by a law passed

[1] *Inf.* xxxi. 20.

in 1251 their height was reduced to 50 braccia, about 150 feet, the sole purpose of this law, as initiated by members of the "Arti," being the discomfiture of the "Popolo Potente," the ruling classes of Florence. Towards the close of the thirteenth century, as we are assured, there were upwards of one hundred and fifty of these towers within the walls of the City, although their proportions had been so greatly reduced. Comparatively few of them have survived to our own day, and it is necessary to go to San Gemignano near Siena, or some other small town where the hand of the destroyer has been less busy than in Florence, to realize in its entirety the effect they must have produced. Still a certain number of these towers remain, especially in Via Lambertesca and Borgo Santissimi Apostoli on the north side of the river, and Borgo San Jacopo in Oltrarno. From a window in the Sala del Niobe in the Uffizi Gallery, the towers of the Gheradini, Baldovinetti, and Acciaiuoli families may be seen together, the whole forming a very typical group of early buildings.

Associated with the towers were the Palazzi of the nobility, frowning fortresses, with machiolated battlements and narrow windows, far more suitable for purposes of offence and defence than

for the circumstances of family life. Florence, indeed, lived in a chronic state of faction fight and street warfare, and her nobles required some stronghold that could sustain a siege if necessary. From these Torri and Palazzi they swooped down into the streets at the cry of "Accor' uomo"—"Help, Help"—ready and eager to join in the fray, whether the combatants were fighting on the side of the different political parties, or were simply actuated by a desire for private revenge.

Members of the same house usually supported each other in these contests, and for this reason their dwelling places clustered together—for example, in Via dei Bardi at one time there were no less than twenty-three Palazzi belonging to the family from whom the street was named. The abodes of the "Popolo Grosso," or well-to-do tradespeople, the rising burgher class, were to be found in all the older portions of the town, sandwiched in among the Palazzi of the Grandi; but the bulk of them were doubtless situated in the manufacturing districts, such as the Sestiere of Ognissanti, and some parts of Oltrarno. Of the humble thatched huts of the "Popolo Minuto," or working class, that large but insignificant section of the community whom the chroniclers

of all times have been apt to overlook, and who hardly became articulate in Florence until the rising of the "Ciompi," or wooden shoes, no trace remains. They were crowded together, especially on the spot now occupied by the beautiful gardens of the Cascine, and in a certain "Borghe" or suburb of Oltrarno that from the poverty of its inhabitants bore the title of "Pitigliso"—the beggar's quarter.

Ever since the earliest period of her existence Mercato Vecchio had been in a sense the heart of Florence, and by the thirteenth century the Palazzi of her nobility clustered thickly round it, the mediaeval houses in not a few instances concealing mosaic pavements and other relics of the settlers in Roman Florentia. Cacciaguida mentions the Old Market in connection with the Caponsacchi[1]—the family to which the mother of Beatrice belonged—who had descended thither after the destruction of Fiesole. In the age of Dante, the Vecchietti, the Elisei, the Amidei, the Nerli, and other noble families dwelt there. The title of "Mercato," the market-place *par excellence*, had been bestowed on it in the year 1079, when it became the centre of the retail trade of the city, markets having been held previously in many parts of the town.

[1] *Par.* xvi. 121.

Down to the end of the nineteenth century Mercato Vecchio was one of the most interesting places in Florence; the Torre dei Caponsacchi, the Casa degli Amidei, and one of the Vecchietta Palaces were still to be seen there; the shields of former noble occupants were yet visible on several of the houses, and four old churches stood, one in each corner of the square. Unfortunately a passion for modernization then seized on the Florentine municipality, and instead of trying to preserve and restore the treasure that the ages had spared, the whole was destroyed with a ruthless hand. A terrible modern Piazza, bearing the name of Vittore Emmanuele, from which, as has been cleverly said, even the equestrian statue of the first King of United Italy is vainly trying to escape, now stands on the site of the Old Market. It is the greatest loss that lovers of Dante have been called upon of late years to endure, and one that is unfortunately absolutely irreparable.

The historian Villani says that by the close of the thirteenth century there were a hundred and ten churches and convents in Florence. Of these latter five were nunneries, sheltering five hundred devout women, and ten were monasteries inhabited by monks belonging to

Photo: Alinari.

MERCATO VECCHIO.

the Regular Orders. At that time religious observances were still bound up with the events of daily life in a manner which we, who live in an age when a hard-and-fast line is apt to be drawn between things spiritual and things temporal, to the great detriment of both, find it difficult to understand. As yet the majority of Florentines were intensely orthodox in their beliefs, although a few individuals among them had become tainted with the scepticism that invariably, in a greater or less degree, was one of the products of the Renaissance. Probably every noble family in Dante's day had definitely associated itself with some special church. If not actually the founders or rebuilders of this church, they were at least the owners of a chapel that they decorated according to their own taste—often at considerable expense—where Masses were said for them, and their dead were laid to rest.

Nor were the burgher class backward in this respect, for members of each "Arte" or trading guild were linked together by religious services, performed in the official Church of the Guild, and by corporate works of mercy, done under the sanction of the ecclesiastical authorities.

Philanthropy was not as yet the prevailing motive for deeds of benevolence, the primary

desire of the founder of a hospital for the sick, or a hostel for travellers, being the greater glory of God and the good of his own soul. It was a great age for the establishment of confraternities; organizations in which laymen were banded together for purposes of devotion, or with the idea of carrying out some special act of charity.

One of these confraternities, extant in the time of the Poet, has survived to the present day. The visitor to Florence is sure to make acquaintance, sooner or later, with the Brethren of the Misericordia, who, after the lapse of so many centuries, may still be seen conveying the sick to hospital or the dead to burial. This confraternity was, it is said, instituted in the year 1240 by Piero Borsi, a porter employed by the Arte di Calimala—the great Guild of Foreign Cloth—among his fellow workers. Dante must have been familiar with the sight of these shrouded figures gliding through the streets, intent on their charitable errands, but at that time they presented a more cheerful aspect than is now the case, for the Brethren wore cloak and hood of red, and carried a red litter. The beautiful Loggia, called the Bigallo, in Piazza del Duomo, stands on the site of their

early burying ground; the house where the confraternity now meets on the south side of the same Piazza was only bestowed on it by the Grand Duke Francis I. in the year 1575. To watch a funeral by torchlight in the evening, or, better still, to attend a meeting of the Misericordia, and see the ceremonial that accompanies the vesting and setting forth of the Brethren, is to be taken back suddenly into the atmosphere of religious *mediaeval* thought, and will help us to realize something of the spirit in which works of mercy were undertaken in the days of the Poet.

Another well-known Florentine institution was already in existence before Dante's birth, for in the year 1218 the first Foundling Hospital was built by Giudalotto de Volto dall' Orco, a rich and popular citizen. It stood outside the walls of the City near the Porta San Gallo, and was dedicated to Our Lady; in 1294 it was placed under the patronage of the Arte della Seta, the Guild of Silk Merchants. Nearly two hundred years later this early hospital was incorporated with the new Spedale degli Innocenti, recently erected by Brunelleschi in Piazza dei Servi, at the expense of the same Guild. The most casual passer-by at the present day cannot fail to be attracted to the exterior of

this later hospital by the presence on the Loggia of the famous "tondi," the exquisite swaddled infants of Andrea della Robbia. While appreciating the beauty of these lovely works of art, the Dantist will also remember that the fine building they adorn is in a very real sense the successor of the little hospital, "fuori le muri," that the Poet may himself have visited.

During Dante's childhood the churches of his birthplace were still chiefly of the Basilican type, a simple ground plan, consisting of a parallelogram, divided longitudinally into three aisles, separated by rows of pillars connected by round-headed arches, and having at the east end an apsidal termination. Probably the earliest of these churches was San Lorenzo, not, of course, the Medicean building of that name, but one standing on the same site, founded by a Florentine woman named Giuliana, in gratitude for the birth of a son, and consecrated by no less a person than St. Ambrose himself. Santa Reparata, at one time the Cathedral of Florence, was another church of a similar pattern; it was destroyed while Dante was yet in the City, in order to make room for the great Duomo.

But small trace remains of either of these ancient Houses of God or of other churches

that resembled them. Outside the walls of Florence, however, standing high above the Arno, there still uplifts itself to heaven San Miniato al Monte, a Basilican building but little altered since the Poet referred to it in the famous passage in the *Divina Commedia*—

> "La chiesa, che soggioga
> La ben guidata sopra Rubaconte."[1]

San Miniato was founded in the year 1013 by Alibrando, Bishop and citizen of Florence, and dedicated to a Roman soldier, Miniatus, who suffered in the Decian persecution, being twice exposed to the lions on his refusal to give up his faith in Christ. The exterior of the church is somewhat disappointing, for the fine façade is a century later than the age of Dante, though it may have replaced one of earlier construction, and somewhat similar design, and the Campanile is but the successor of the original bell-tower, which collapsed in the year 1499.

All sense of disappointment is, however, at an end when we pass into the interior of the building, for it is much in the same condition that it was when first erected. By an arrangement very unusual out of Tuscany, the nave leads directly to the crypt, with the sanctuary

[1] *Purg.* xii. 101.

above it, serving as upper story, approached by flights of steps from the side aisles.

Standing in the centre of the nave we are surrounded by beautiful specimens of early workmanship, such as the low marble screens that outline the sanctuary, and the richly inlaid pulpit, bearing an image of a woman, "Mater Ecclesia"—our Mother the Church—an eagle, type of Divine Inspiration, being placed above her head, while below her feet is a lion, the emblem of power. In the apse is an ancient mosaic, showing the Saviour enthroned, in the act of blessing the Madonna, while on His left side stands San Miniato, habited as an Eastern prince, and offering up his crown. The whole design of this mosaic is absolutely Byzantine in style, and was already so old in the year 1297 that it was in process of restoration.

Beneath our feet lies a lovely pavement of "Opus Tessalatum," laid down in symbolic patterns, one square representing the signs of the Zodiac, the gift of the abbot Josephus in 1207, and the walls are sheathed with marble slabs, chiefly the spoil of the temples of those heathen gods whom Miniatus refused to worship.

No great imagination is required to behold

Photo: Alinari.

INTERIOR OF SAN MINIATO AL MONTE.

the writer of the *Divina Commedia*, perchance on the festival of San Miniato (October 25), gazing upon all these wonders, or kneeling at Mass in the crypt before that selfsame altar, under which the relics of the heroic soldier still rest in peace. Even the little Chapel of the Crucifix, standing in the centre of the nave, though of much later date than the remainder of the church, only recalls to our minds a legend Dante must have known, and, we cannot but believe, have loved. Two hundred years before his time San Giovanni Gualberto, the founder of the Vallombrosan order, while still a layman, had met one Good Friday the murderer of his brother, on the hill below the church. The wretch begged for life in the Name of the Lord Who had suffered as on that day, and this appeal the future Saint found himself unable to resist. After freely pardoning the assassin, he entered the sacred building, and as he knelt before the Image of the Crucified, exhausted doubtless by the mental struggle through which he had passed, the Figure on the Cross bowed down to him in token of approval of the deed just performed by His merciful servant. In an age like that of Dante, when such supreme importance was attached to the act of revenge, men must still have remembered with wonder and admiration

the forbearance exercised for love of the Saviour by San Giovanni Gualberto.

The latter half of the thirteenth century was indeed a period of transition, and this fact is nowhere shown more clearly than in the architectural history of Florence. During the few years that Dante dwelt in his native City before going away into exile, no less than three of the largest and most important of the churches—the Duomo, Santa Maria Novella, and Santa Croce—were begun. Not only so, but a great alteration had taken place alike in the manner of construction, and the ideals by which the builders were inspired. The spirit of the Renaissance that was sweeping over Italy had reached Florence, and the simple Basilican style which had hitherto contented her citizens was not found sufficiently magnificent for the growing desires of the rising generation. They wished for churches of greater size, where large masses of people might worship together, and where elaborate ceremonies could fitly be performed. The quadrangular plan yielded to the cruciform, and the pointed arch, an introduction from the north of Europe, but little in use at an earlier date, was frequently employed. Owing to the increase of wall space a greater amount of

decoration became necessary, and precious marbles were lavished on the exterior of the buildings to an extent as yet unknown, while the art of the fresco painter rendered the interior glorious indeed. To estimate the importance of the new ideals that had begun to make themselves felt in the age of Dante, it is only necessary to contrast the Duomo with San Miniato al Monte, or to imagine Florence deprived of three of her noblest possessions, that same splendid Duomo, and the Churches of Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce.

Whatever may have been the shortcomings of the mediaeval Florentine, he almost invariably cherished a devoted attachment to his native town, and therefore it is not wonderful that the years witnessing the erection of three famous churches also saw the birth of the Palazzo della Signoria, the most imposing of the civic buildings of Florence. This fine palace, once the dwelling place of the Priors of the Republic, is too closely associated with the political life of Dante to be more than mentioned here. Both it and the Palazzo del Podestà, the official home of the chief magistrate of the City, begun in the year 1255, but still in progress of construction at the close of the thirteenth century, will be fully described hereafter.

Second only in importance to the buildings in which the government of the City was actually conducted, were the houses of the different trading guilds, each of the twenty-one "Arti" providing an official abode for their "Consuls." The greater number of these guild-houses have been destroyed, one or two quite recently, but the Torrione of the Arte della Lana, adorned with the arms of the "Art of Wool"—the Agnus Dei bearing a banneret—may be seen in Via di Calimala, close to Or San Michele. It was built in the thirteenth century, but the ugly buttress connecting it with the church is of later date. The great hall behind it, also of considerable antiquity, is now called the Sala di Dante, and is used for lectures given by members of the Societa Dantesca Italiana. Near at hand is the residence of the Guild of Butchers, whose emblem, "a black he-goat rampant," is still visible. Two Palazzi belonging to the Lamberti family, one in Mercato Nuovo, the other in Via Pellicceria, that had been handed over to the Arte della Seta and the Arte degli Oliando respectively, after the expulsion from Florence of their original owners, are also yet in existence.

The names of certain modern streets bring back memories of the different "Arti"; Via

Calzaioli was so called from the presence there in old days of the factories and shops belonging to the Guild of Stocking-makers, while the Guild of Furriers and Skinners had their quarters in Via Pellicceria. Even in the more aristocratic parts of Florence signs of industry prevailed everywhere, very few, if any, of the noblest families holding themselves aloof from some kind of trade. The visitor to Borgo degli Albizzi may yet see on the window frames of Palazzo Alessandri the rods on which the cloth that was the special product of the Arte di Calimala was hung out to dry. The reproach levelled at the English might have been applied more truthfully to the Florentines, they were indeed "a nation of shopkeepers," and their merchandise was well known all over Europe. Mediaeval Florence had begun by being an oligarchy, by the close of the thirteenth century she had become what Villani calls her, a "Republic of merchants."

The gold florin of Florence, to which Dante makes three allusions in the *Divina Commedia*,[1] was at once the sign and seal of her commercial prosperity. It was first struck in the year 1252 in the "Zecca" or mint that then stood on the site of the Uffizi, her coinage having before this

[1] *Inf.* xxx. 74; *Par.* ix. 130; *Par.* xviii. 134.

date been carried out in bronze and silver only. It was about the size of an English sovereign, and was stamped on one side with the image of St. John Baptist, Patron of the City, and bore on the other the famous lily or "Giglio," the badge of the Republic. It contained twenty-four carats of unalloyed gold, and was not only universally accepted as a standard of currency throughout Italy, but became the model of the gold coinage of England, France, and Spain.

So great was the demand for this beautiful coin by the close of the thirteenth century, that the Zecca was called upon to turn out no less than 400,000 gold florins annually. Fazio degli Uberti, in the *Dittamondo*, when he would describe fine gold, says, "Pura era come l'oro del Fiorino," and to our Poet it served as the symbol of money in general. In the tenth "Bolgia" of the *Inferno*, among other impostors, the pilgrims behold the spirit of Maestro Adamo of Brescia,[1] at one time employed in the Florentine Mint, who counterfeited the florin, altering the legal proportions of the metals of which it was compounded, to the advantage of his patrons, the Counts of Romena, for which crime he was burned to death. Numerous examples of the gold florin, including some

[1] *Inf.* xxx. 61.

specimens that were current during the years that Dante spent in his birthplace, and may consequently even have been handled by him, may be seen in the Museo Nationale, or Bargello, the ancient Palazzo del Podestà.

Consider a little the social conditions of the City where the Poet's youth and early manhood were passed, conditions changing every day. We learn from Villani that the Florentines of the middle of the thirteenth century, as in the age of Cacciaguida, "lived soberly, and on coarse food, and at small expense." The men wore leather jerkins and worsted caps or "berrette," while even the great ladies were content with scarlet gowns, of rough cloth, plainly made, and without ornament, over which in the winter they placed fur-lined mantles with hoods attached.

As we see from the words that Dante puts into the mouth of his great ancestor, alterations for the worse in this respect had taken place before he left the City. The unassuming garb in which the noble citizens had gone about their business, typified by "the belt of leather and the clasp of bone,"

"cinto
di cuoio e d'osso,"[1]

[1] *Par.* xv. 112.

had been replaced by much gayer clothing. Surcoats of brocade and fur, often embroidered with coats of arms and other devices, were worn by the younger men, while their elders bore the "lucco," a long hanging garment of scarlet or black silk, or fine serge. The ladies also shared the taste for magnificent apparel, silken robes were the rule on festive occasions, and the Florentine beauties adorned themselves with chains, diadems, and girdles "that caught the eye more than did the wearer."[1] Not only did they offend in this matter, but they immodestly uncovered their persons to the common gaze,[2] and painted their faces the better to attract attention. The first sumptuary law by which Florence attempted to curb the extravagance of her women was passed in the year 1290, only a few years before these passages were written, and this curious little fact seems to show that the severe strictures Dante makes on the subject of female attire were not altogether unjustified.

The author of the *Divina Commedia* appears to award the palm for luxury and prodigality to the natives of the neighbouring city of Siena.[3] He mentions the names of four Sienese,[4] who belonged to a society called the

[1] *Par.* xv. 100.
[2] *Purg.* xxiii. 103.
[3] *Ibid.* xiii. 151.
[4] *Inf.* xxix. 125.

"Brigata godereccia," composed of twelve young men, who wasted their substance in riotous living, spending, it is said, the enormous sum of two hundred thousand florins in twenty months. One of this band of spendthrifts, Niccolo Salimbeni, according to Dante, "discovered a new use for cloves,"[1] nothing less, so some commentators assure us, than the employment of them as fuel for the roasting of game; while others shod their horses with silver, and forbade their servants to pick up the shoes if they fell off.

These absurdities roused the wrath of the Poet, and he speaks of them in a tone of bitter irony, but there is reason to believe from the evidence of his own works that Florence also was not free from that special form of self-indulgence that shows itself in too great devotion to the pleasures of the table. It is remarkable that the first spirits that meet us —the one in the "Bolgia" where gluttony is punished, the other in that "Cornice" of *Purgatory* where a like sin is in process of expiation—are both Florentines. In the former instance it is an unimportant citizen called Ciacco[2] (pig), who Dante recognizes with difficulty; in the latter it is his own friend

[1] *Inf.* xxix. 127. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 52.

and kinsman, Forese[1] Donati, who he evidently dearly loved. The Poet also finds great fault with the early age at which marriages were contracted in Florence, the large dowry demanded with her maidens, and the manner in which the married women had discontinued the use of spindle and distaff[2]—all signs and tokens of a period of luxury, and in some respects of decadence.

Visitors to Italy at the present day cannot fail to notice the fact that the inhabitants of both towns and villages spend a large proportion of their time in the open air, especially during the summer months. Details of the culinary art, and processes connected with the toilet are freely carried on outside the houses; bargains are struck in the streets and squares; and neighbours and friends meet and chat in the nearest convenient corner that offers a little shade. It is only at night—a night which seems far too short to the weary traveller, longing for quiet in which to sleep—or during the hours of the daily siesta, that the people remain in their homes.

This taste for an *al fresco* existence, combined with a disregard for privacy that seems

[1] *Purg.* xxiii. 48. [2] *Par.* xv. 117.

strange to us dwellers in the North, is now of course confined to the poorer classes, and perhaps also to a certain limited extent to the bourgeoisie. In Dante's time, however, it was not so, for even the Grandi of the City were accustomed to transact their business or take their pleasure for the most part in public, before the eyes of their fellow citizens. Wedding feasts, banquets, and all kinds of festivities were held in those loggie or porches which we have already mentioned as being annexed to the Palazzi of the nobility; and in them also were often hatched the plots and counter-plots by which Florence was so frequently torn asunder. These loggie seem to have served at once for dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, and council chambers, and must have been a most valuable addition to the fortress-like dwellings of the aristocrats of the City, buildings which from lack of ventilation could not fail to be airless and uncomfortable in the hot weather that lasts for so many weeks in Tuscany.

In addition to the frequent entertainments provided by individual citizens for their acquaintances — entertainments that usually, from their semi-public character, gave pleasure to many beside the invited guests—certain

occasions were set apart for general rejoicing. First and foremost of these was the Calends of May, a festival which in the warm climate of Italy, so unlike that of England, really did celebrate the coming of "Primavera," the most delightful season of the year. On this day the streets were alive with bands of young men and women—sometimes a thousand strong—beautifully dressed, carrying garlands of flowers and musical instruments, following in the footsteps of a leader, called the "Lord of Love," and singing "Maggiolata," or songs of spring. The houses were decorated with green boughs and bright-coloured hangings, and dancing and games took place in the different squares of the town, notably in Piazza Santa Trinità. Prominent citizens—like the father of Dante's Beatrice—feasted their friends in their own homes, choosing a young maiden as "Contessa di Maggio," or Queen of the May, in allusion to the famous Matelda. It is not impossible that the little daughter of Folco Portinari had been thus chosen on the occasion of her first meeting with the Poet, and that the "crimson" vesture that left such a deep impression on his imagination was in reality the symbol of mimic royalty.

Another great festival in Florence was the

twenty-fourth of June, the commemoration of the Patron, St. John Baptist, the day when the well-known "Pallio," to which Dante refers in the sixteenth Canto of the *Paradiso*, took place. This "annual giuoco,"[1] or yearly game, was a race, the horses starting from San Pancrazio in the western ward of the City, and running through Mercato Vecchio to the eastern ward, the prize bestowed on the winner being a cloak or "Pallium" of rich crimson velvet. Another Pallio was run on the Feast of St. Barnabas, the anniversary of the battle of Campaldino, a public holiday, and a great opportunity for merry-making. These contests for the Pallium served as the principal amusement of the mediaeval Italian; they were usually accompanied by some kind of religious ceremonial, and, though the idea is strange enough to us, who are only too well acquainted with the degrading associations of the modern race-course, there can be no doubt that a sacred signification was attached to them. Dante had probably himself witnessed the Pallio of Verona, to which he makes allusion in the *Inferno*,[2] a foot race, for which the prize was a "green mantle," run annually on the first Sunday in Lent.

When Dante, on leaving the "Bolgia" where

[1] *Par.* xvi. 42. [2] *Inf.* xv. 122.

the robbers are tormented by fiery serpents, bids Florence exult because "she beats her wings o'er sea and land,"[1] his words, though spoken in a spirit of angry sarcasm, inspired by the dishonesty of her citizens, record a literal and simple fact. The commerce of the City had become so great, that by the beginning of the fourteenth century, she was in touch with all the civilized nations of the world. The agents of the Arte di Calimala and the Arte della Lana were doing business in England, France, Spain, Portugal, and Flanders, bartering the beautiful products of the Florentine looms either for fleeces or undressed cloth. There were several wool trading companies in London, and not a few of the English monasteries supplied them with the needful raw material.

The Florentines were also the great bankers of Europe; with one hand they lent money to kings, notably our own Henry III. and Edward I., while with the other they collected the tribute called "Peter's Pence" for the Holy See. A single family, the Bardi, in Dante's day, had legal representatives in France, England, Ireland, and Germany, while the London agent of another well-known house, that of the Frescobaldi, was appointed by Edward I. to the post of "director

[1] *Inf.* xxvi. 1.

of the currency" in England, his business being to correct mistakes made by English banks.

At the first Papal Jubilee in the year 1300, no less than twelve powers, including the Emperors of Byzantium and Germany, and the Kings of France and England, were represented by Florentines. Pope Boniface VIII. was so struck by this circumstance that he remarked that Florence was "far and away the greatest of all cities," adding the words, "She feeds, clothes, and governs us all. Indeed she appears to rule the whole world. She and her people are, in truth, the fifth element of the universe."

We are rather too ready to think of mediaeval Florence as merely a City, whereas in the age we are considering she had become a large state—about a sixth part of the whole area of Tuscany being included in her Contado. As Hyett tells us, her rule "extended almost to the walls of Pistoia, nearly half-way to Pisa and Lucca, and much more than half-way to Arezzo and Siena." In the immediate vicinity of the City were many villas surrounded by gardens and orchards, to which the richer citizens were in the habit of retiring during the summer heats. Villa Bellosguardo belonged at that time to the Cavalcanti family, and doubtless Dante's chief

friend, Guido, often sought refuge there, to read and meditate, and write those poems he passed on to his great literary rival. There also Dante must have visited him, and it is not difficult to imagine the two scholars, their friendship as yet unbroken by political differences, pacing along the terrace from which such a beautiful view of Florence is obtained, discussing perchance a passage in the *Vita Nuova*, or even possibly planning a rough draft of the *Divina Commedia*.

Dante himself was not without a personal interest in the affairs of the Contado, for a meadow just outside Porta San Gallo is known to have been his property. He was also the owner of a little estate called "Camerlata under Fiesole," that was handed over by his sons after his death to his half-brother, Francesco Alighieri, in payment of a sum of two hundred and five gold florins advanced to him in the year 1300. Francesco sold it shortly afterwards to Accerito and Giovanni Portinari, nephews of Beatrice. The "Villa Bondi," the well-known centre of the terra-cotta industry, on the old road between Florence and Fiesole, stands on the site of the thirteenth-century dwelling-house, some portions of the latter, it is believed, yet surviving, incorporated into the walls of the more recent building.

The external aspect of the country that was once subject to Florence has altered but little since the Poet's day, the "everlasting hills" still keep watch and ward round his birthplace, as they did of old, while the "towered towns on cypress heights,"[1] that form such a conspicuous feature in the Tuscan landscape, have, as far as situation is concerned, known hardly any change or alteration. Nature has undergone no convulsions here, as in other parts of Italy, nor have social or political revolutions had any great influence on the lives and customs of the country folk. The vintage and olive harvests are still conducted for the most part as they were in the thirteenth century—modern innovations having obtained little footing here —and great white oxen with huge horns and gentle eyes yet bring into the villages the product of field and vineyard. The visitor to the rural districts of Tuscany at the present time will see every day a thousand sights —familiar to Dante and his contemporaries— that will enable him to understand the better the many pastoral allusions that find a place in the pages of the *Divina Commedia.*

[1] Evelyn Underhill.

CHAPTER II

THE DANTE-QUARTER OF FLORENCE

"Incipit Vita Nova."—DANTE.

"Throughout the *Vita Nuova* there is a strain like the first falling murmur which reaches the ear in some remote meadow, and prepares us to look upon the sea."

THE Sestiere di Porta San Piero Maggiore, the Sestiere in which Dante himself dwelt, was one of the original divisions of Florence. It lay south of the Baptistery, on both sides of the Via del Corso and the Borgo degli Albizzi, extending on the west as far as a little beyond the Via Calzaioli, the eastern termination being in Piazza San Piero Maggiore. The famous Benedictine convent from which the name of the Sestiere was derived, stood in close proximity to the "Porta," or gateway. This very ancient foundation held a unique position among the religious houses of Florence, for to the church that belonged to it came every new Bishop, immediately after his first entrance into the City, there to go through a

curious ceremony of spiritual marriage with the Abbess. All trace of the original convent has long vanished, but in the Borgo degli Albizzi there still remains one arch that formed part of the façade of a seventeenth-century church which replaced the older building, so that we know exactly the position it once occupied. The two keys of St. Peter, those keys that Dante places in the hands of the Angel who sits at the Gate of Purgatory,[1] served for coat of arms to this Sestiere. In the Poet's time it was one of the chief residential districts of Florence, and the somewhat invidious name of "Sesto di Scandali"—from the feuds of its inhabitants—had been bestowed on it.

The "Casa di Dante"—the so-called house of the Poet—stands in a small street, formerly Via San Martino, now Via Dante Alighieri, in close proximity to the Bargello, and not very far from the western boundary of the Sestiere di San Piero Maggiore. The visitor to this most fascinating part of Florence can hardly fail to be thrilled when he stands before the little doorway that gives admittance to the Casa and reads the inscription, "In questa casa degli Alighieri nacque il divino Poeta," but still it must be confessed that further consideration

[1] *Purg.* ix. 118.

brings with it a certain measure of disappointment. The most that can be said with any sort of confidence about the present house is that it probably stands on the site of a portion of the original dwelling of the Alighieri family, which in the time of Dante extended much further back, having its principal frontage in Via Santa Margherita, and that one or two of the rooms contained in it may possibly date from the thirteenth century. Not only has the Casa di Dante suffered greatly from neglect and alteration, but it was unfortunately "restored out of all decency" in the year 1877, after the municipality acquired it for the purpose of throwing it open to the public.

Passing through the narrow entrance, a steep staircase leads to a room on the second floor where a few Dante relics are preserved. Here are to be seen early editions of the *Commedia*, coins and glass panes of the period, a bust of the Poet by the daughter of the Pisan sculptor, Duprè, and laurel leaves found in the sarcophagus at Ravenna, where the remains of Dante lie. One cannot but wish that it were possible to establish in this building a regular museum, where the various manuscripts relating to the history of the Poet and his works—now scattered

Photo: Alinari.

CASE DEGLI ALIGHIERI AFTER RECONSTRUCTION IN 1911.

all over the City, or at least facsimiles of them —might be rendered easily accessible.

The Florentine Archives contain certain documents that would be of immense interest to all Dantists, and each of the three great libraries possess treasures that many travellers —from far-off lands—would rejoice to behold. In the Biblioteca of the Uffizi, for example, is the most ancient Codex of the *Divina Commedia* in existence; also a copy, once belonging to the Sassetti family, with a profile portrait of Dante as he appeared in middle age. Boccaccio's autograph MS. of the Eclogues and Epistles, together with a fourteenth-century copy of the *Commedia*, on one page of which is the famous "Bearded Dante," are to be found in the Biblioteca Laurenziana; while in the Biblioteca Riccardi—attached to a Codex of the *Canzoni*—is another interesting portrait of the author—half-life size. If these and similar objects were once gathered together, the "Casa di Dante," in spite of the uncertainty that attaches to its past history, would become, what all good Florentines would wish it to be, a not altogether unworthy shrine for the memory of their Divine Poet.

The view to be obtained from the windows of this room is a very notable one. Immediately

opposite to the Casa is the Torre della Castagna —a tower that in the Poet's day belonged to the monks of the Badia, and had for some years served as a dwelling-place for the Podestàs of Florence, until the building now known as the Bargello was ready for their occupation. A little to the right of this ancient tower lies the tiny Piazza San Martino al Vescovo—the very centre of the Dante-quarter of Florence—most intimately associated with the life-story not only of the Poet but of his ancestors. When Cacciaguida tells us that the birthplace of both himself and his forefathers lay close to the "Last ward"—"l'ultimo sesto"[1]—reached by the competitors in the horse-race on St. John Baptist's day, he is practically assuring us that he lived in the immediate vicinity of this Piazza. Curiously enough the truth of this statement is borne out by a deed now in the State archives of Florence, in which his two sons, Alighiero and Pretenitto, bind themselves to cut down a fig-tree that was growing in their garden against the wall of San Martino—the church that may be seen on the east side of the square—at the request of the then rector.

It is well known that the Poet owned property—probably inherited from Cacciaguida—in

[1] *Par.* xvi. 40.

and about this Piazza, and many of his personal friends and foes inhabited dwellings either in the square itself or the narrow streets by which it was surrounded. To take one instance only at the present moment, close at hand stood the house of Geri del Bello,[1] that cousin of the Poet who is to be found among the sowers of discord in the *Inferno*, a sullen spirit, declining to take any notice of his kinsmen, because the violent death he had sustained at the hands of members of the Sachetti family, who also lived hard by, was as yet unavenged. The little Piazza bears such an air of antiquity that it is difficult to forget, as we look upon it, the passage of six long centuries of change and progress, and so we can easily return in spirit to those years when Dante and his associates loved and hated, feasted and fought in the Sestiere di San Piero Maggiore.

The custodian who keeps watch and ward over the Casa di Dante finally throws open a door leading out of the room overlooking the Piazza San Martino, into an almost wholly dark chamber behind it, and says in a tone of deep impressiveness, "Here was born the Divine Poet." No authority can be quoted in support of this statement, and the exact truth of it may

[1] *Inf.* xxix. 27.

well be questioned; still there is no doubt that the event that gave to Florence her most famous son, and to the world in general the noblest of Christian Poets, really did take place very near to the spot where the Casa stands.

But few details concerning the family of Dante have come down to us, nor do we hear much of his early life. A prophet has no honour in his own country, and none of his contemporaries were aware that he, more than any other in his day and generation, belonged to the race of the immortals, and that posterity would welcome gladly the most trifling piece of information concerning him.

We do know from his own words that he was born "sovra 'l bel fiume d'Arno alla gran villa,"[1] in the great town by Arno's stream, in the year 1265.[2] The exact date of his birth is uncertain, but from his reference in the *Paradiso*[3] to the influence exerted over him in after life by the constellation of the "Twins," there is reason to believe that it occurred shortly after the eighteenth of May, the day when the sun enters Gemini. May the thirtieth, the Festival of St. Lucia of Syracuse—his possible Patron Saint—has been suggested, and this suggestion seems not unlikely when we remember the Lucia of

[1] *Inf.* xxiii. 95. [2] *Ibid.* xxi. 113. [3] *Par.* xxii. 115–132.

the *Commedia*, and the manner in which she befriends Dante, first by bringing Beatrice to his assistance,[1] and then by bearing him up in her arms to the gateway of St. Peter.[2]

The Poet's father, Alighieri di Bellincione degli Alighieri, was a notary by profession, and his signature is still in existence, affixed to the transfer of a piece of land. He appears to have been an unremarkable person, and the fact of his obscurity doubtless enabled him to escape banishment, when the more prominent members of the Guelph party, with whom he had associated himself, were driven out of Florence in the year 1260. Of Dante's mother, "Madonna Bella," as Boccaccio calls her, nothing whatever has been ascertained, but it is conjectured that she was the daughter of a man of some note, Durante di Scolaio degli Abati, from whom her son may have derived his Christian name. She was almost certainly the first wife of Alighiero, and died young, probably wholly unaware of the future glory of the child she had brought into the world, though, according to the author of the *Decamerone*, a prophetic dream came to her before his birth, and she saw him as a peacock, standing under a laurel tree.

[1] *Inf.* ii. 100. [2] *Purg.* ix. 55.

"A single line in the *Commedia* is her only memorial."[1] Her husband married Lapa di Chriarissimo Cialuffi, the descendant of a well-known Guelph house, and by her had three children, a son named Francesco, and two daughters, one of whom was called Tana.

In none of his works does Dante make any direct allusion to his parents, and it would seem likely that they did not play a very prominent part in his life—he probably never knew his mother, and his father is supposed to have died when he was quite a boy. One reference to his family alone survives, for in the *Vita Nuova*[2] he speaks of a young and gentle lady, who watched over him in his illness, and was of his near kindred—"la quale era meco di propinquissima sangiunta congiunta"—and it is thought that this unknown damsel was one of his half-sisters. By nature the Poet was undoubtedly of an austere temperament, but it may be that the loneliness of his youth developed in him the severity of mind that became such a strong feature of his character in later days, turning him into an "alma sdegnosa,"[3] indeed—a "disdainful soul"—having but little patience with the follies and pettinesses of frail humanity.

[1] *Inf.* viii. 45. [2] *V. N.* xxiii. [3] *Inf.* viii. 44.

It is evident from the passage in the *Inferno*, where Brunetto Latini warns Dante of the ill will borne to him by the "Beasts of Fiesole"[1] —the Florentine descendants of the original inhabitants of Tuscany—that he himself believed that the family from which he sprang belonged to the "holy seed" of Rome.[2] In confirmation of this belief Boccaccio tells us that in early times a member of the house of the Frangipani, Eliseo by name, came from Rome, settled in Florence, and founded the family of the Elisei, of whom Cacciaguida was one. Dante himself bore the coat of arms of the Frangipani, with some slight difference in colour—the "canting" crest, "Azure, a wing erect, or," Aligiro, *i.e.* winged, Alighieri—frequently to be seen on modern souvenirs of Florence, having been only adopted by his posterity some years after his death.

Of the history of Cacciaguida—Dante's great great grandfather, the ancestor whom he had most reason to revere—we know the rough outline from the account he gives of himself to the Poet, at the time of their meeting in the Heaven of Mars. He was born in Florence,[3] and baptized in the old Baptistery,[4] was

[1] *Inf.* xv. 73.
[2] *Ibid.* xv. 76.
[3] *Par.* xv. 130.
[4] *Ibid.* xv. 134.

knighted by the Emperor Conrad III.,[1] and died in battle fighting against the Paynims. It is not impossible that, as seems to be implied in the beautiful line where Cacciaguida indicates the manner of his end—

"E venni dal martirio a questa pace"

—"and came to this peace from martyrdom"—that Dante regarded him as having passed directly into Paradise without previous Purgatorial discipline, for death in a Crusade was considered an equivalent of martyrdom, and the Church has always looked upon martyrdom as a sacrament of plenary grace.

The wife of Cacciaguida came to him from the valley of the Po, probably from Ferrara, and it was from her that Dante's surname of Alighieri was derived, it having been bestowed on her eldest son, and borne by his descendants, no settled rule as to the transmission of names as yet obtaining in Italy. This same elder son, the first Alighiero of Florence, at the time of his father's meeting with Dante, an interval of more than a hundred years having elapsed since his death, was yet detained in the first "Cornice" of Purgatory,[2] and needed the prayers of his

[1] *Par.* xv. 139. [2] *Ibid.* xv. 91.

Photo: Alinari.

EXTERIOR OF BAPTISTERY. "VOSTRO ANTICO BAPTISTEO."

great grandson to set him free. It may be conjectured that a tendency to that selfsame sin of pride, for which the elder Alighiero had paid so dearly, was apt to be hereditary in the family. The Poet does indeed describe himself more than once in the *Commedia* as a "lamb," but as a commentator has pertinently remarked, "Did ever lamb roar so like a lion before?" and from various passages in his writings we see that he was not unaware of his own shortcomings in this respect.

Whatever may have been Dante's feelings with regard to his ancestry, there can be no doubt that, after the age of Cacciaguida, envious time had clipped the mantle of the greatness of his house,[1] and that his descendants had done little or nothing to maintain its fair proportions. With one honourable exception, that of the Poet's uncle, Brunetto di Bellincione, who was in charge of the Carroccio or war-chariot of Florence at the famous battle of Montaperti, when the river Arbia ran red with blood—

"Che fece l'Arbia colorata in rosso,"[2]

none of Dante's immediate ancestors attained to any special distinction in the service of the Republic. We have also abundant evidence

[1] *Par.* xvi. 7. [2] *Inf.* x. 86.

that at the time of the Poet's birth, the Alighieri family were not by any means in the front rank of Florentine "grandi," neither were they overburdened with wealth, nor in any way distinguished by their intellectual gifts. It was reserved to the little son of Alighiero the Third and Madonna Bella to do much more than restore the waning glories of the house of Cacciaguida.

We have no information as to the manner in which Dante obtained his education, an education that must have been of a very unusual excellence even in an age when learning of all kinds was highly esteemed, and when, as we are assured, the very "gamins" of Florence were able to read. The idea that Brunetto Latini[1] was his tutor, in any ordinary sense of the word, has been generally abandoned, for he was already fifty-five years of age when Dante was born, and too much occupied with state affairs to be able to find leisure for the drudgery of actual tuition. Like the father of the Poet he was a notary, as the title "Ser" Brunetto suggests, and probably took an interest in the promising son of his dead confrère, encouraging him in his work, and directing the course of his studies. No

[1] *Inf.* xv. 30.

better adviser in intellectual matters could have been found at that time in the length and breadth of the City, for Brunetto Latini was both a poet and a philosopher, "the first," as Villani tells us, "to bring culture to the Florentines." During the course of a long life he had been much abroad, and was well acquainted with the Tuscan, Latin, and French languages. In his later days he held the important position of notary and secretary of councils to the Commune of Florence, and in the space of ten years his name appears on no less than thirty-five public documents.

That he exerted a profound influence over the mind of Dante is evident from the manner of the latter's address to him during their strange and sad interview on the burning sand of the Seventh Circle of the *Inferno*. The Poet assures his old friend that his "dear paternal image"—

"La cara e buona imagine paterna,"[1]

is graven in his heart, and that to him he owes that most valuable of all possessions, the knowledge "how a man becomes eternal"—"come l' uom s' eterna."[2] Brunetto Latini was the author of two books, *Le livre dou Tresor*, a species of early encyclopedia, "treating of all

[1] *Inf.* xv. 83. [2] *Ibid.* xv. 85.

things that appertain to mortals," written in the French language, and *Il Tesoretto*, an allegorical treatise, composed in his own native tongue. The first of these he recommends to the Poet,[1] at the moment of his departure from him, evidently holding it in high esteem.

It has been said that Dante borrowed the original idea of the *Divina Commedia* from Brunetto's second book, *Il Tesoretto*. Some superficial resemblance may perhaps be detected by the careful student between the two works, but the essential difference between them is so immeasurable, that it is impossible not to agree with the verdict of Zannoni, "If any one is pleased to imagine that this is the case, he must confess that a slight and almost invisible spark has served to kindle a vast conflagration." In addition to many documents bearing the signature of Brunetto Latini, a memorial of him still exists in Florence, for part of his tomb is preserved in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, close to the Via Cerretani. He was buried in the cloisters attached to the building, but the portion of his monument that has survived has been removed into the interior of the church, where it may be seen in the chapel on the left side of the High Altar. It bears the

[1] *Inf.* xv. 119.

inscription, "Sepulchrum Ser Brunetto Latini et filiorum."

Dante's earliest work, the *Vita Nuova*, in which he writes down for us the history of his love for Beatrice, opens with the only incident of his childhood that he thought worthy the trouble of relating. When nine years of age he met for the first time[1] the little girl who was to dominate the whole course of his after-life, to serve as the object of his devotion while on earth, and to guide him when she had passed away, through sphere after sphere, up to the Throne of the Most High. This incident, in common with all the other events that find a place in the pages of the *Vita Nuova*, is described more after the manner of a vision, than as if it were the record of an actual fact. We seem to see Dante and Beatrice and all the other actors in the drama of the Poet's youth, through the medium of water or vapour, a veil of some kind, translucent, it is true, but not wholly transparent, being stretched out between us and them.

In this instance, while describing the dress in which the glorious lady of his mind—"la gloriosa donna della mia mente"—appeared

[1] *V. N.* ii.

to him, of "a most noble colour, a subdued and goodly crimson," and the effect that her presence produced on his own heart, he neglects to tell us her family name, or the circumstances under which his first meeting with her took place. We are indebted to Boccaccio, and to him only, for the information that Beatrice was a daughter of Folco Portinari, and that Dante saw her first at a May-day festival at the house of her parents, to which he was escorted by his own father.

Not a few commentators have thought fit to question Boccaccio's statement as to the identity of Beatrice, but it must be remembered that the novelist, though somewhat prone to credulity, had in this case exceptional opportunities of ascertaining the truth. He is known to have been the son of a man who in the famous Bardi bank had for fellow-worker a nephew of Beatrice Portinari; in 1353 he was sent on a mission to the daughter of the Poet, and when he lectured on the *Divina Commedia* in Florence twenty years later, members of the Portinari family were still dwelling in the City. We shall therefore accept his statement that Beatrice Portinari was indeed the Beatrice whom the Poet loved.

The Via Santa Margherita, hard by the Casa di Dante, brings the visitor to the junction of the Corso with the Via del Proconsolo, and this is almost undoubtedly the path that the elder Alighiero and his little son must have trod, as they went on their way to the abode of Folco Portinari, on that first of May so long ago. All trace of the home where Beatrice was born, and where she encountered the child who in later life was to say of her "what had not before been written of any woman"—"che mai non fu detto d'alcuna"[1]—has long vanished. On the site that the Palazzo Portinari once occupied, stands at the present time the Palazzo Salviati, now a school of the Scolopi Friars, but in the Cortile of the more modern palace is still pointed out the "Nicchia di Dante," the little coign of vantage from which, as is supposed, the Poet when a youth watched for his Lady.

The Portinari family bore originally the name of Folci, and were in all probability descended from Fiesolan stock. Their surname of Portinari, and their crest, "a gateway between two lions gardant," was due to the fact that one of their ancestors—Recovero Folco—had towards the close of the twelfth century

[1] *V. N.* xliii.

been keeper of the Porta di San Piero Maggiore, the gateway of Dante's own Sestiere.

Messer Folco, the father of Beatrice, the representative of the house of the Portinari in Dante's day, was held by all men in high esteem. The Poet speaks of him in the *Vita Nuova* as being a man of "exceeding goodness"[1]; and Pope Gregory X., while hating his political principles, said, "He is a Ghibelline, but a Christian, a citizen, and a neighbour." He was specially exempted from the sentence of banishment pronounced on the party to which he belonged in the year 1268, was one of the fourteen "Buonomini" instituted by Cardinal Latino in 1281 to seal the peace established between Guelphs and Ghibellines, and held the office of Prior on three occasions.

He is best remembered in our own day and generation as the original founder of the Spedale of Santa Maria Nuova, still the chief hospital of Florence. Four years before his death, by a deed of gift, he offered the hospital and the chapel adjoining it to God the Father, the Saviour, and the Blessed Virgin Mary, "as an atonement," so the document runs, "for the sins of myself and my family, and for the service of the sick poor." It is said that the idea

[1] *V. N.* xxii.

of this work of charity was first suggested to him by his servant Monna Tessa, who was in the habit of receiving sick persons, and nursing them in her own room in her master's house, and a marble figure still to be seen at the entrance to the hospital is regarded by the poorer Florentines as an authentic likeness of this good woman, though unfortunately for romance it belongs to a much later period than the founding of the hospital.

In Folco's will, in which he left to "Madonna Bice"—his daughter Beatrice—the sum of "fifty lire a Fiorini," not quite £8 of our money—she having already received her marriage portion—he desired to be buried in the chapel of his foundation. His wishes were loyally carried out, and his tomb still survives, although both chapel and hospital have been rebuilt, it having been re-erected in the Church of Sant' Egidio, where his simple epitaph may yet be read. That Beatrice sincerely mourned the death of her father may be gathered from that section of the *Vita Nuova* where it is related "How certain ladies of her companionship"[1] came together to comfort her under her great loss, and how they bore tidings of her grief to the sorrowful Dante. Folco Portinari had

[1] *V. N.* xxii.

married Cilia di Gherado de Caponsacchi,[1] like himself of Etruscan ancestry, and by her he had eleven children, of whom Beatrice was the eldest. One of her brothers, Manetto by name, was beloved of the Poet, who speaks of him as "a friend whom I counted as second unto me in the degrees of friendship"—"era amico a me immediatemente dopo il primo."[2]

Owing to the dreamlike character of the *Vita Nuova* it is very difficult to discern clearly the history of Dante's Lady. She is indeed shown under many of the ordinary aspects of daily life, passing through the streets of the City, refusing or granting her salutation to Dante,[3] attending the services of the church,[4] or sitting at the wedding feast,[5] but no direct mention occurs of that event, which must have been of supreme importance to her lover, her marriage to Simone dei Bardi, in the year 1287. There are so many questions one would like to ask in this connection, if there were any possibility of obtaining answers to them. Did the young Alighieri ever put his fate to the test, and demand the hand of Beatrice? and did Messer Folco prudently refuse his consent? preferring for son-in-law a member of the great banking-

[1] *Par.* xvi. 121. [2] *V. N.* xxxiii. [3] *Ibid.* iii–x.
[4] *Ibid.* v. [5] *Ibid.* xiv.

house?—"the pillars of commerce and of Christianity," as Villani calls the family. Had the marriage, as has been suggested, a political significance? the Bardi being of the Guelph faction, while the Portinari were chiefly Ghibellines, one of the many attempts made about this time to unite the rival parties by means of wedlock. We know not—we shall never know.

One thing at least is certain, Beatrice secured a gallant husband, for Simone took a conspicuous part in the battle of Campaldino, and was knighted for his prowess by King Charles of Naples, and appointed "Consigliere del Commune." After her marriage it seems likely that she left the friendly Sestiere di Porta San Piero Maggiore, and crossed the river to that Via dei Bardi in Oltrarno, which still bears the name of Simone's family, and where the chief Palazzo belonging to them, though much altered, yet stands.

At length, on June the eighth, 1290, the calamity that Dante seems to have been anticipating through all the latter part of the *Vita Nuova* actually happened, and Beatrice died at the age of twenty-four, leaving behind her a City that, as the Poet tells us, "sat desolate"[1]

[1] *V. N.* xxxi.

when it heard of her death, and departing to that High Heaven where the angels are at peace—

"Nel reame ove gli angeli hanno pace."[1]

The romance of Dante's youth was ended, and the dread Vision of his later life was close at hand. The devotion he had felt on earth was about to be transfigured and spiritualized on the other side of the veil, and the same gracious figure that had saluted him in Florence would then come to meet him serene and radiant amid the glories of the Triumph of the Church, with those divine words on her lips, "Ben son, ben son Beatrice"[2]—"I, even I, am Beatrice." The *Vita Nuova* is but the prelude to the *Divina Commedia*, and the burden of both is identical, for the Poet wishes to say to us in either instance—

"Io vo' con voi della mia donna dire"[3]

—"of mine own Lady would I speak to you."

Was there ever a love-story like this? so pure and peaceful, standing out in such high relief against the background of the age when it was enacted, an age of feuds and fighting, of deeds of unbridled passion and wild revenge. The very year that the little "Bice" saw the light

[1] *V. N.* xxxii. [2] *Purg.* xxx. 73. [3] *V. N.* xix.

was one of tumult and outrage in the City of her birth, for the populace, led by Gianni Soldanieri,[1] a traitor whom the Poet beholds imprisoned in the ice of "Antenora," rose in rebellion against the rule of the Ghibellines, and great was the trouble before the revolt could be suppressed. Without the walls of "La gran villa," while Dante and his Lady were infants, France and Italy struggled together for the possession of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and the rightful heir, Conradine of Suabia,[2] perished on the scaffold, at the instance of Charles of Anjou. This act of cruel injustice was destined to be followed by a tardy but terrible retribution, for in 1282, a few months before the "Salutation" of Beatrice, tidings were brought into Tuscany of the "Sicilian Vespers," the massacre in a single day of every man, woman, and child of French nationality in the town of Palermo.[3]

Nor were the doors of the Temple of Janus in Florence closed for any great length of time during the short span of Beatrice's earthly existence. Folco Portinari's elder daughter was hardly out of her cradle when her countrymen routed the Sienese at the battle of Colle in Val

[1] *Inf.* xxxii. 121. [2] *Purg.* xx. 68.
[3] *Par.* viii. 75.

d'Elsa,[1] and not long before her passage to the other world the more famous engagement of Campaldino[2] took place, Dante and Simone dei Bardi fighting together on the Guelph side, against the inhabitants of Arezzo and the Ghibelline "fuor-usciti" or outlaws. Some of the most appalling tragedies of modern times also occurred during the years of this exquisite romance. Guy de Montfort slew his cousin "in grembo a Dio"[3] in 1272, a deed that thrilled all Catholics with horror; twelve years later Francesca da Rimini,[4] the only Christian woman Dante mentions by name in the *Inferno*, met her pitiful end; and in 1280 Count Ugolino de Gherardeschi[5] and his sons were starved to death in the Tower of Famine at Pisa.

No portrait exists in Florence or elsewhere of Beatrice Portinari, and he who has immortalized her has never sought to describe her personal appearance. He does, however, speak of her "pearly pallor,"[6] and compares the colour of her eyes to that of emeralds,[7] so that it would seem she was of a more blonde type of beauty than is usual in Italy, though, as a matter of fact, the Florentines, from their mixed nationality,

[1] *Purg.* xiii. 115. [2] *Ibid.* v. 92.
[3] *Inf.* xii. 119. [4] *Ibid.* v. 116.
[5] *Inf.* xxxiii. 13. [6] *V. N.* xix. [7] *Purg.* xxxi. 116.

are often of as fair a complexion as the English. Neither do we know where her lovely body was laid to rest, probably in or about the Church of Santa Reparata; Santa Croce, where three chapels were afterwards built by the Bardi family whose arms—three red weaving shuttles, linked with weaver's cord upon a gold field—may be seen in the windows, having not as yet been begun.

The visitor to the Uffizi Gallery is reminded of Beatrice when he stands before the triptych by Hugo van der Goes that Tommaso Portinari, a descendant of Messer Folco, presented to the hospital founded by his ancestor towards the end of the fifteenth century. The Nativity of our Lord occupies the centre of the picture, but in the side wings Tommaso himself, then an agent of the Medici at Bruges, and his family are shown in the act of being presented by their Patron Saint to the Madonna. These portraits of the kinsfolk of Dante's Lady are not without interest; both Tommaso and his children are of somewhat pleasing appearance, but the wife is plain and hard-featured, and looks as if she might have come of Flemish ancestry, as is not unlikely from the fact of her husband's residence in the Low Countries.

It can only be with a certain feeling of regret and surprise that the reader turns from the idyll in which Beatrice is the central figure, to think of the actual event which followed so closely on her death—the marriage of the Poet to Gemma Donati. What could have been the motive that inspired this hasty action? an action that, if Boccaccio is to be believed, he lived long enough to regret bitterly. Possibly, as has been suggested, she really was the "Donna della Fenestra"[1]—the young and beautiful lady who looked out at Dante from her window and pitied him at the time of his greatest need; and, as has been often said, "pity is akin to love." That he had known her all his life is probable, for although the majority of the Palazzi of the Donati family stood at a little distance from his own home, the branch to which Manetto, the father of Gemma, belonged, dwelt in Piazza Donati, hard by the Piazza San Martino.

As far as worldly position goes, Gemma Donati was no unfitting mate for the young Alighieri, for she came of a well-known house, the members of which as far back as the time of Matelda had taken a prominent part in the public affairs of Florence—their names being

[1] *V. N.* xxxvi.

included in a contemporary list of Judges and Assessors of the City. It seems likely, however, if—as is supposed—she only brought him the small dowry of two hundred lire, that her father was not in good circumstances at the date of the marriage.

According to tradition, the wedding of Dante and Gemma took place in San Martino al Vescovo, the little church that stands within sight of the Casa di Dante. It is not always easy to gain admission into the interior of this building, but by inquiry at one of the neighbouring shops the whereabouts of the sacristan can usually be discovered. It is through a doorway whose proportions are so insignificant that it might well be an entrance to some humble dwelling-house, that we pass into the church, and find ourselves in the tiny nave, cut off from the tinier chancel by a simple wooden screen. Whatever it may have been in the thirteenth century, San Martino is now a poor little place enough—low vaulted, small windowed, with hardly anything except its association with the Poet to attract the attention of the visitor. It was one of the older churches of Florence, having been founded in 986 by an Irish archdeacon of Fiesole, who presented it to the monks of the Badia.

There is reason to believe that Dante's marriage took place in the year 1291, and until the period of his exile, he and his wife in all probability inhabited the house that stood at the corner of Via San Martino and Via Santa Margherita. Several children were born to them, though the exact number has never been ascertained. It is said that two sons, Alighiero and Elisei, died in infancy of the plague—that curse of mediaeval times that seems to have reappeared at intervals in all the cities of Italy; and that an elder daughter, Imperia by name, lived to grow up and marry Tano di Bencivenni Pantaleone, a citizen of Verona. It is impossible to discover the truth of these statements, but sufficient evidence remains to prove the existence of a family of two sons and two daughters—Jacopo, Pietro, Antonia, and Beatrice.

The elder son, Jacopo, took minor orders and became a canon of the parish church of San Giorgio in the diocese of Verona, but he never sought the priesthood, and finally married. In company with the elder Dante he was declared a rebel by the Republic of Florence in 1315, and, like his father, refused to accept the degrading conditions that would have permitted his return to the City a few months

later. Pietro was by profession a "giureconsulto," or lawyer, who had taken his degree at Bologna. Both brothers joined Dante during the last years of his life at Ravenna, and after their father's death they devoted themselves to the task of perfecting his labours, first by seeking out and transcribing the last Cantos of the *Divina Commedia*, and then by the preparation of commentaries on the great poem. Jacopo, in the year 1325, availed himself of an indulgence which allowed him, on payment of a fine, to re-enter his birthplace, and appears to have lived in Florence until his death.

Pietro, curiously enough—though not apparently even in minor orders—held two benefices at Ravenna, the gift of Caterina Novella da Polenta, the widow of Dante's host. He ultimately settled in Verona, where he attained to a certain degree of civic importance, being appointed a judge of the Commune in 1337, and in 1361 the vicar of a college of merchants. He died in 1364 while on a visit to Treviso, and was buried in the Church of Santa Margherita in that city. His descendants for several generations lived on at Verona, and there their tombs may yet be seen in the Church of San Fermo Maggiore, bearing the inscriptions, "Dante III.," "Dante IV.," as if, as Ampère

says, the illustrious Poet "had founded a dynasty."

Nothing is known of the history of Antonia, but Beatrice, the daughter who bore the name of Dante's dead Lady—like her brothers—followed her father to Ravenna. After he passed away, she entered the Convent of San Stephano degli Ulivi, not far from his resting-place, where she died about the year 1369, leaving by will three gold ducats to her nunnery. A modern tablet, on the site where the convent once stood, records the fact that here "Beatrice . . . si voto a Dio."

The biographers of the Poet, following in the footsteps of Boccaccio, have said hard things of Gemma Alighieri, and have declared that the violence of her temper embittered the life of her husband. This may or may not be true, but the fact remains that she and Dante never met again after he left Florence, for when her three children sought out their father at Ravenna, she stayed behind in her native City. A document is still extant by which, in 1315, she received a small bequest from her mother, Maria Donati, and she is known to have survived Dante by some years, as she was still alive in 1332. If not a very lovable character,

she appears at least to have been a prudent woman, capable of looking after the affairs of her family, for at the period of her husband's disgrace, she stored their more valuable possessions in the houses of neutral friends, so that they escaped destruction when his dwelling-place was sacked by order of the Republic. To this forethought and care on the part of the despised Gemma, it is said that we owe the preservation of the seven first Cantos of the *Divina Commedia*, which their author had left behind in Florence when he started on his ill-fated expedition to Rome in the year 1302. According to Boccaccio, Andrea Poggi, a nephew of the Poet, found the precious manuscript hidden away with other papers in a certain chest, and it was forwarded to Dante, who said on receiving it, "The restoration of my greatest work, and the return of my honour for many centuries"; and thus turning back to his old thoughts, and resuming his interrupted labours, he began his eighth Canto with the words, "Io dico seguitando."

The history of the house with which Dante became allied by his marriage is most closely bound up with that of the Sestiere di Porta San Piero Maggiore, as the Donati were the founders in the ninth century of the Benedictine

convent, from which the very title of the Sestiere was derived. Their habitations had in the first instance clustered closely round their foundation in the Borgo degli Albizzi, but by the time of Dante, the family had become a very large clan, and Palazzi belonging to them were to be seen in nearly all parts of the "Sesto di Scandali," more especially—as in the case of the father of Gemma—in that Piazza to which they gave their name. The Torre dei Donati still stands in Via del Corso, hard by the Church of Santa Margherita dei Ricci—a mute witness to the nobility of the family, and also to the turbulence of their disposition. They belonged to the Guelph division of the Grandi of Florence, and were distinguished for the readiness with which they threw themselves alike into civic broils and private quarrels.

A long-standing feud existed between them and their near neighbours in the Piazza San Piero Maggiore, the Cerchi, a feud that after bringing much trouble in its train, caused the death of two prominent members of the rival houses on Christmas Day in the year 1301. They were in almost constant warfare with the Adimari, "that presumptuous crew, that plays the dragon after him that flees,"[1] the family that

[1] *Par.* xvi. 115.

Dante so cordially detested. Nor were they, at least, in certain instances, free from a more mean kind of vice than that of violence, for Cianfa Donati[1] figures among the thieves in the Seventh Circle of the *Inferno*, while Simone Donati[2] is accused of an act of fraud in connection with the will of a kinsman, which he perpetrated by the aid of Buosa, a relative of Guido Cavalcanti. Towards the close of the thirteenth century the then head of the house, Corso Donati, took a very prominent part in the political affairs of his native city. He and Dante were by nature antagonistic, and in constant opposition to each other on all questions of state, and it will therefore be necessary to speak at some length of him in a later chapter, when we come to think of the public life of the Poet before his exile.

Before leaving the Sestiere of Porta San Piero Maggiore it would be well to say a few words touching the brother and sister of Corso, Forese and Piccarda Donati, both of whom figure in the *Divina Commedia*, albeit in two different Canticas of the great poem. As Dante, escorted by Virgil, ascends "the mount that healeth him who climbs," he finds Forese[3] in

[1] *Inf.* xxv. 43. [2] *Ibid.* xxx. 44.
[3] *Purg.* xxiii. 48.

that "Cornice" of Purgatory where the sin of gluttony is expiated. Very beautiful is the interview that takes place between the penitent sinner and the man who on earth had not only been united to him by the bands of a close friendship, but had also—as it has been said—given him the first impulse to repentance. Forese had delayed to turn to God until he was overtaken by fatal illness, and only five years having elapsed since his death, the Poet is surprised to see him so far advanced on the upward course, but he explains that the rapid progress he has made is due to his wife Nella,[1] who has assisted him with her sighs, prayers, and tears, having never forgotten for an instant the husband she so deeply loved. He also explains the manner in which purification is effected in the "Cornice" of the gluttonous, and intimates that the spirits experience greater pleasure in satisfying the demands of Divine Justice, than sorrow in bearing the punishment laid upon them. Their wills are at one with that of the Most High, and so even the anguish by which they are expiating their misdeeds, brings with it a sense of joyful resignation.

Dante asks him where Piccarda is,[2] and he replies that his sister, who was at once beautiful

[1] *Purg.* xxiii. 87. [2] *Ibid.* xxiv. 10.

and good, "he knows not which the more," has gone to Olympia—Paradise—and there the Poet finds her among the souls of those who have been constrained to break their vows. Her spirit is in the Moon, the lowest sphere of the celestial order, but no sense of disappointment or loss is hers. She comes to meet him, radiant with gladness, glowing with the flame of love, and answers his questions as to the lot assigned to her in a speech of great beauty, one line of which, "a rare gem," as Mr. Gladstone calls it—

"In la sua voluntade e nostra pace"[1]

—"in His Will is our peace"—is as exquisite as anything Dante ever wrote. In even greater measure than could be possible as yet to her brother, Piccarda has learned the true secret of the Christian life—conformity to the Will of God—and knows that in that secret lies hid the happiness of Heaven. She tells the Poet her history while on earth, how she had dedicated herself in her girlhood to the service of her Lord, and entered a convent of the Poor Clares, hoping to spend the rest of her days in that quiet refuge. She was torn from the "sweet cloister"[2] by men on evil bent, and

[1] *Par.* iii. 85. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 107.

"God alone knew how after that her life was framed."

"Dio si sa qual poi mia vita fûsi."[1]

According to a monkish chronicler, Corso Donati was the person responsible for this act of sacrilege, for which at a later date he was compelled to perform public penance in his shirt. Together with eleven other ruffians he entered the convent, seized his sister, and having stripped the habit from her, forced her into marriage with his friend Rossellino della Tosa. She died, it is believed, almost immediately afterwards, passing away to Him Whom she had desired to serve, safe at last surely "in that haven where she would be." The Pia Casa di Lavoro—the Workhouse of Florence in Via dei Malcontenti, close to Santa Croce—now stands on the site once occupied by the Franciscan Convent of Monticelli, where Piccarda took the veil. She herself is not altogether forgotten in her native City, for as the "Blessed Costanza"—that being her name in religion—she is now commemorated in the Florentine Calendar.

[1] *Par.* iii. 108.

CHAPTER III

PIAZZA DEL DUOMO

"Dante painted the sublime visions of mediaeval faith—the logos of the Middle Ages."

"He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and ill,
He saw thro' his own soul.
The marvel of the everlasting Will,
An open scroll,
Before him lay."

TENNYSON.

LET us turn now to the Piazza del Duomo, and visit this sacred spot, still, as in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the ecclesiastical centre of Florence. Many and great have been the changes wrought out here in the course of six hundred years, and it is doubtful, supposing the Poet could return to his native place, if—but for the presence of the ancient Baptistery—he would recognize the Piazza he knew so well. It is, however, interesting to note, that he himself witnessed the commencement of that process of demolition and

reconstruction that has little by little transformed this most fascinating portion of the City into what it is at the present day.

At the time of his birth the Piazza was of very limited extent, closely girt round with towers and tall, narrow houses, inhabited for the most part by members of the leading families of Florence. To the east lay the Church of Santa Reparata, a small building of the Basilican type, occupying the space where the choir of the Duomo now stands. It had been founded in the eighth century, and was fast falling into a ruinous condition. The façade was panelled with black and white marble, entrance being gained into the interior through a round-headed doorway, while above, in the gable, was a large circular window devoid of tracery. The internal arrangements of the building resembled San Miniato, the nave terminating in a large crypt, to which the chancel served as an upper story. Although at this period Santa Reparata was no longer the Cathedral of Florence, it had not ceased to exert a distinct influence over the religious life of the City, for it was emphatically a church of the laity, who were encouraged to take part in the services held there. Immense psalters with musical notation were set up at the

entrance to the sanctuary, so that men and boys might join with the clergy in the chanting of the daily offices, a custom that was continued in the Duomo, and has survived to modern times, as visitors to the Cathedral will remember.

To the north of Santa Reparata stood the belfry, an old tower built in four stages and crowned with a short spire, while on the spot where, fifty years later, Giotto's exquisite Campanile would uplift itself to heaven, was the tiny oratory of San Zenobio, belonging to brethren of the Servite Order, the spiritual descendants of "Seven Servants of the Blessed Virgin, who had been miraculously called upon to lead a life of contemplation."

The Baptistery, of great age even then, showed grey and bare, the external walls of "macigno," or rough sandstone, being as yet unadorned with marbles, while it was approached by flights of steps, rendered necessary by the inequalities of the Piazza. All around this most ancient church, then serving as the Cathedral of the diocese, extended a large Campo Santo, the graves clustering thickly in the vacant space that lay between it and Santa Reparata, while numerous sarcophagi, many of them of Roman origin, and other memorials of the dead, hindered the free passage of the

living. All was homely and simple, and better suited to the ideas prevalent at the time of Cacciaguida than to those of the age in which Dante's lot was cast.

In spite of the encumbered condition of the Piazza it was, and had probably always been, since the introduction of Christianity, the scene of all the chief religious and political functions of the City. Miracle plays were performed there, and processions frequently passed through it, going usually to the Baptistery, where, as Villani informs us, "marriages and peace-makings, and every festival and solemnity of the Commune," were wont to be celebrated. It was also a great place of resort for the noble citizens of Florence, who were in the habit of repairing thither, especially on Sundays, to meet each other in friendly fashion, whenever the various public and private feuds in which they were so constantly involved permitted a little social intercourse.

It was therefore hardly wonderful that in the year 1293, when Dante was twenty-eight years of age, the authorities finally determined to take measures to increase the amount of available space contained in the Piazzo. The task was intrusted to Arnolfo del Cambio, a native of the little town of Colle di Val d'Elsa,

Photo: Alinari.

INTERIOR OF BAPTISTERY. "IL MIO BEL SAN GIOVANNI."

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a pupil of Niccola Pisano, the famous sculptor, who had assisted his master in many of his undertakings, and had afterwards been in the service of Charles of Anjou. Before coming to Florence he had spent some years in Rome, acquiring the traditions of the "Cosmati" builders, and leaving behind him many beautiful works of art, not a few of which are still in existence. In pursuance of his object he pulled down portions of the Canonica del Duomo, the residence of the Cathedral canons, and some of the neighbouring houses, not without protests from the owners of the latter, who were not inclined to sacrifice their private interests to the public weal. This done, and an increase of space secured for the Piazza, he next turned his attention to the Campo Santo, and, recognizing the fact that sentiment for the dead must yield to the convenience of the living, he removed the sarcophagi into Santa Reparata, and levelled the whole surface of the pavement. At the same time he covered the walls of the Baptistery with slabs of green and white Prato marble, and demolished the flights of steps, which were now found to be unnecessary.

His labours must have given satisfaction to his employers, for only a year later he was honoured with a commission to rebuild Santa

Reparata, the small size and lack of stateliness of the old church ill according with the rising prosperity of the City. A spirit of emulation doubtless had something to do with the decision of the Florentines in this matter, for the neighbouring town of Pisa had already a splendid Cathedral, and the Sienese were busily occupied in the construction of that exquisite Duomo, which even in its unfinished condition strikes the traveller with wonder and admiration. Arnolfo had no reason to complain of any want of scope for his genius, for he was ordered "to raise the loftiest, most sumptuous and most magnificent pile that human invention could devise, or human labour execute." He lost no time in setting about his great enterprise, and the first stone of the new structure was laid in 1298 by the Papal legate, Dante being probably present at the ceremony. A record still exists of this service of benediction, in a tablet with a Latin inscription built into the wall of the Duomo, close to the Campanile.

After the death of Arnolfo his design was greatly modified, and the noble church, so dear to the hearts of all visitors to Florence, owes comparatively little to him. If we wish to know what he meant his Cathedral to be like we must look at the fresco of the "Church

Militant and Triumphant" in the Spanish Chapel of Santa Maria Novella, in the background of which it is represented. The slender twisted shafts and delicate decorations serve to remind the beholder that Arnolfo was strongly influenced by the "Cosmati," that wonderful family of builders, who have left traces of themselves within the walls of Rome, and in the surrounding towns and villages. Although the Poet could have seen hardly anything of the new Cathedral, as he left the City for ever in the year 1302, there is a pleasant tradition that connects it with him, for let into a wall on the south side of the Piazza is a slab bearing the words, "Sasso di Dante," said to mark the position of a little stone bench on which he used to sit and watch the laying of the foundations.

The visitor to Florence, when he catches sight of the Duomo through one of the entrances to the Piazza, would find it difficult to feel any sense of regret for the destruction of Santa Reparata, and yet it seems a pity that so little, so very little, should be left of the old church of Dante's childhood and youth. A few courses of stone that once formed part of the ancient building are to be seen in the walls of the present edifice, and two statuettes representing the Saviour and Santa Reparata, with other

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fragments from the façade, are preserved in the Opera del Duomo, but this is all that envious time has spared.

Even the original dedication was lost after the rebuilding, and Santa Reparata, who had been patroness of the City for six hundred years, yielded her place to the Mother of Christ, under the title of Santa Maria del Fiore—Our Lady of the Flowers. The earlier dedication was a peculiarly interesting one, for it was connected with the miraculous period of the ecclesiastical history of Florence, the age of Zenobio, the most famous of her early Saints.

This good Bishop was born in the last year of the reign of Constantine, and when but a lad, embraced the Christian faith. The story of his life is largely obscured by a mist of legend, but it seems certain that he was a man of great personal austerity, of boundless charity, the protector of the poor and oppressed, and the devoted friend of St. Ambrose, at that time Bishop of Milan. In company with two disciples, Eugenius and Crescentius, he lived in a little monastery on the site of the present Church of San Lorenzo—then outside the walls —and afterwards in a tower in Via Por Santa Maria, that still survives, and bears either the name of the Saint, or that of the family of

the Baldovinetti, to whom it subsequently belonged.

Shortly after his elevation to the Episcopate, the City of which he was chief pastor was threatened with a terrible danger, for Rhadegasius the Goth, with his horde of barbarians appeared close to the gates of Florence. San Zenobio gave himself up to prayer, especially invoking the aid of Santa Reparata, whose festival, observed on October the eighth, was then being celebrated. In answer to his intercessions the Saint appeared in person holding in her hand a blood-red banner on which was emblazoned the well-known "Giglio," or lily, and fighting on the side of the citizens, speedily enabled them to win the day. The grateful Florentines erected a church in honour of Santa Reparata, and thus it came to pass that this obscure Saint of Palestine who had suffered death in the Decian persecution, became associated with the history of Dante's birthplace.

There is no mention either of Santa Reparata or of the church which was called after her in the pages of the *Commedia*, but the Poet may have beheld her with the eye of his imagination among the other pure spirits in Beatrice's "Convento delle bianche stole"[1]—"the convent

[1] *Par.* xxx. 129.

of the white stoles." She is not an unfrequent figure in Tuscan art, being shown standing usually on one side of the Madonna and Child, bearing crown and palm in memory of her martyrdom. On the modern façade of the Duomo, a statue of Santa Reparata faces San Zenobio on either side of the principal doorway, and thus, in some slight measure, after the lapse of so many centuries, she has come into her own again.

We will now go straight to the centre of the Piazza, and turn our attention to that building which is more intimately associated with Dante than any other in the world, except perhaps the sad little Temple at Ravenna, where all that is mortal of the Poet lies. The Baptistery is of octagonal form, and at least as old as the ninth century, as it is mentioned in a document of the year 897, and some writers think it was originally built by the Romans, and dedicated to the god Mars. Dante's allusion to the changing of the patron of the City[1] seems to show that he at least believed the truth of this supposition. Be this as it may, it was largely rebuilt about the year 1150, at the expense of the Arte di Calimala, the Guild of Foreign Cloth. The

[1] *Inf.* xiii. 143.

Photo: Alinari.

FAÇADE OF DUOMO.

apse where the altar stands was added, and the centre of the cupola closed in with a lantern, for before then it had been open to the sky, as is still the case with the Pantheon at Rome.

Like every other Baptistery probably in Christendom it is dedicated to St. John Baptist, the stern preacher of repentance, who baptized the Saviour in the waters of the river Jordan, and thus became the precursor of all those who administer the initial Sacrament of the Church. Since the year 1108 each child of Florence has been brought hither to be made a Christian, a rude register of the numbers and sex of the newly baptized being kept during the Middle Ages by the dropping into a vase of a white bean for a girl, and a black one for a boy. This primitive method of registration left much to be desired in point of detail, and there is no means of ascertaining from it the date when the infant son of Alighieri and Madonna Bella was here received into the mystical Body of Christ, and endowed with the prophetic name of Dante, or Durante—the "lasting one."

How many of the personages who in after-life were profoundly to influence the history

of the Poet were carried into this old Baptistery in their innocent infancy, "Beata Beatrix," for example, "the giver of blessing,"[1] and also Corso Donati, to whose venomous hatred Dante probably owed the greatest of all the misfortunes that befell him, his exile from the City where he first saw the light. The visitor who would remember these things should enter the ancient building on Sunday afternoon, and witness the rite of Baptism, as then administered to numberless babies—a hurried, slightly perfunctory ceremony, as it seems to the casual beholder, with great elaboration of ritual, salt being put into the mouth of the child, and chrism on the back of the neck.

Although, as one would suppose, the Baptistery must have been among the most precious of the treasures of mediaeval Florence, it appears, from a statement of the Chronicler Villani, to have had a narrow escape from destruction in the year 1249. It was then largely frequented by members of the Guelph party, while the Ghibellines, unable even to worship in peace with their political antagonists, associated themselves with the neighbouring Church of San Piero Scheraggio. At that time a tall house belonging to the Adimari family

[1] *V. N.* ii.

stood at the corner of the Via Calzaioli, on the exact spot where the Bigallo now stands. It bore the title of "Guadamorto," or "Watcher of the Dead," either because it overlooked the Campo Santo, or because the dead were sometimes "watched" there, in a room in the lower story, on the night previous to burial. The Ghibellines having, after a faction fight, got the upper hand in Florence, decided to pull down "Guadamorto," in the hope it would fall across the Church of San Giovanni Baptista and reduce it to ruins, a strange example, as it seems to us, of the blind bitterness brought about by party strife. Their evil plan, however, was frustrated by the sculptor Niccola Pisano, to whom was confided the demolition of Guadamorto, for he, like a true artist, cared nothing for civic warfare, and carried out his difficult task with such skill that no injury resulted to the ancient building.

The exterior of the Baptistery has not altered very greatly in appearance since the time of Arnolfo's restoration, although, of course, the beautiful bronze gates that give entrance into it on three sides had not come into existence in the thirteenth century. If we stand facing the west, and look at the framework of the most

famous of these gates, that lovely pair which Michael Angelo said were worthy of Paradise, we shall notice two columns of red porphyry, one on either hand. These shafts are of some interest to the Dantist, as a story connected with the manner of their acquirement is supposed to be the origin of that feeling of distrust of the Florentines for the Pisans that finds a reflection in the pages of the *Divina Commedia.* They were a gift from Pisa in the year 1112, in gratitude for the protection afforded by Florence to the city during the months that most of the male inhabitants were fighting in Majorca. These columns were believed to be endowed with magical qualities, but the Pisans, according to tradition, before parting with them, passed them through the fire to efface their occult virtues, and thus render them less valuable to their new possessors. The suspicion engendered by this possibly apocryphal tale, repeated by two or three generations of credulous Florentines, is quite enough to account for the harshness of the judgment expressed by the Poet, when he calls the dwellers in the neighbouring township, "le volpi si piene di froda" —"a race of foxes, so replete with craft."[1]

The south door of the Baptistery is always

[1] *Purg.* xiv. 53.

open, and all lovers of Dante should cross the threshold, and devote as much time as they can spare to the interior, which, in spite of monuments and other additions of later date, is substantially what it was in the age of the Poet. It is very dark, from the absence of much window space, and the eye must accustom itself to the "dim religious light" that prevails within the building. The walls are lined with marble panelling arranged in geometric patterns, and the cornice below the gallery is supported by tall columns, sixteen in number—fifteen of grey granite and one of white marble. This latter column is said to have stood near Ponte Vecchio, and to have borne the famous maimed statue of the god Mars, at the foot of which the young Buondelmonte fell.[1]

The surface of the cupola is covered with mosaics, dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century, of no little importance, for not only must the Poet have frequently gazed upon them, but they may have suggested to his mind certain small details that he was afterwards—perhaps unconsciously—to turn to account in the writing of his great poem. Seven sides of the cupola are occupied with concentric zones, given up to representations

[1] *Par.* xvi. 145.

of the seven choirs of angels, and to scenes taken from the Old and New Testament, but the eighth side, that above the altar, is devoted to a single subject, the Last Judgment. A colossal Figure of Christ—"Rex tremendae majestatis"—sits within a circle, having His arms outstretched, the dead rise beneath His feet, the good departing to the right, the bad to the left. The angels blow the trumpets which summon mankind to their doom, and the Apostles assist in the final assize, while the Blessed Virgin and St. John sit opposite to each other as in Dante's "Rose of Paradise,"[1] and Lucifer is shown with a sinner hanging out of his mouth which he is in the act of devouring.[2] The treatment of this portion of the mosaic is absolutely Dantesque in feeling, and if it had but belonged to a later period, we should have imagined that the artist had borrowed not a few of the details contained in it from the study of the *Divina Commedia.*

The very lovely pavement is of the same age as the mosaics, and is composed of pieces of coloured marbles, arranged in the Byzantine style. The signs of the Zodiac and other symbolic images find a place here, while the borders that intersect the whole, are made up

[1] *Par.* xxx. 117. [2] *Inf.* xxxiv. 55.

of wavy lines, suggestive of water, the rivers of Paradise possibly, or that Jordan in which our Lord was baptized. The entire design might have been composed for some textile fabric, and this fact was evidently speedily recognized, for not a few of the first silk brocades of Florence are indebted for the patterns with which the weaver adorned them to the pavement of San Giovanni Baptista.

The font[1] in which the Poet was baptized had been brought from Santa Reparata in 1128. It is, alas, no longer in existence, having been destroyed in the year 1576, during the preparations for the christening of a wholly unimportant son of the then Grand Duke of Tuscany, who, poor mite, died in his sixth year. There is no difficulty in knowing what it was like, for an almost exactly similar font is preserved in the Baptistery of Pisa, within easy reach of a day's expedition from Florence. It was of octagonal shape, thus resembling the building in which it stood for so many centuries, and occupied a large space of ground. The eight sides are said to have been typical of the six days of Creation—the Sabbath of the Rest of God—and that spiritual re-creation that is effected in the heart of the Christian by means of water

[1] *Par.* xxv. 8.

and the Holy Ghost. The chief peculiarity of this species of font are the cylindrical apertures surrounding the central well, in which stood the officiating priests, in order to avoid being jostled by the crowd that filled the Baptistery on certain special occasions. To these apertures Dante alludes in the nineteenth Canto of the *Inferno*, where he compares the pits in which the simonical Popes are placed head downwards, to the "Luogo de' Battezzatori,"[1] the place of the baptizers in the Church of St. John in Florence. He further informs us that he broke one of these apertures for the purpose of rescuing a child who had fallen into the font and was in danger of drowning,[2] an act that had provoked from his enemies a charge of sacrilege, which he indignantly repels. The child is believed to have been a member of the Caviciulli family, and the event is supposed to have taken place on Easter Eve, the most usual day for the administration of Holy Baptism in the mediaeval Church.

Two other references to the Baptistery are to be found in the *Divina Commedia*. In the first of these,[3] Dante's great great grandfather tell him that it was "nel vostro antico baptisteo" —"in your ancient Baptistery"—that he became

[1] *Inf.* xix. 18. [2] *Ibid.* xix. 20. [3] *Par.* xv. 134.

Photo: Alinari.

INTERIOR OF BAPTISTERY AT PISA, SHOWING FONT.

at one and the same time "cristiano e Cacciaguida," was admitted into the religion of Christ and received his Christian name. The other allusion is of a very touching nature, Dante has entered Paradise and ascended from sphere to sphere, beholding as he goes on his way, escorted by Beatrice, an ever-increasing measure of light and glory. He has reached the eighth Heaven, that of the fixed stars, and witnessed the triumph of the Church—the Beatific Vision is at hand—and yet, standing on the very threshold of all that the heart of man desires, he turns back in spirit to "il mio bel San Giovanni,"[1] the little homely building of his early days. He expresses a wish,[2] never as we now know to be gratified, that at the baptismal font to which he had been brought in infancy, he might return in manhood, and there receive the crown of Poet.

Poor banished Dante, a very different offer to that he hoped for was made to him by Florence, yet one which is, strangely enough, connected with the church he loved so well. In the year 1316 it was indeed proposed that he should once more re-enter his native place —but as a criminal; that he should walk in

[1] *Inf.* xix. 17. [2] *Par.* xxv. 9.

procession on the Festival of the Baptist to "my beautiful St. John," and there humbly kneel and sue for pardon. The letter[1] is still extant in which, with noble disdain, he refuses this ignominious offer, and declines to re-enter the City except with honour. "Can I not gaze," he asks, "upon the sun and stars wherever I am? Can I not meditate on the sweetest truths wherever I may be under heaven, but I must first make me inglorious and shameful before the people and the state of Florence?"

It is well, if time permits, to rest a little on one of the seats in the ancient church, and consider Dante's attitude towards that great community into which, in this very building, he was admitted, through the Sacrament of Baptism. A certain number of critics in nearly every age, misled by his scathing denunciations of ecclesiastical abuses, and the scheme of government advocated in the *De Monarchia*, have regarded him as a disloyal and rebellious son of Holy Church, one whom if he had lived at a later period would have broken away altogether from the fold, and joined those sectaries who have parted Christendom into so many warring camps. Hardly had he gone to his account than Fra Guido Vernani—a

[1] Epistle ix.

Dominican Friar of Rimini—denounced his works as heretical, and Bertrand de Poyet, Legate to Pope John XXII., holding the same opinion, wished to cast out his ashes. In 1850, more than five centuries later, a Frenchman, Aroux by name, actually ventured to dedicate to Pius IX., a book with the strange title, *Dante, Heretique, Revolutionaire et Socialiste*, and the Adviser to the Index, Monsignore Vicenzio Tizzani, desired to place the *Divina Commedia* on the list of prohibited books because of Dante's treatment of the Popes.

It seems almost impossible to believe that those who so misjudged the Poet could have been intimately acquainted with the *Divina Commedia*, for on every page of this, his most characteristic work, is clearly written for those who have eyes to see, his full and entire acceptance of Catholic doctrine, his devotion to Catholic practice, and his reverence for duly constituted authority. He speaks of Holy Baptism as the "Portal of the Faith,"[1] and with hardly any exception denies to the unbaptized admission into Paradise.[2] The description he gives of the reception of the penitent at the gateway of Purgatory[3] is plainly suggested by the ritual proper to Sacramental Confession,

[1] *Inf.* iv. 36. [2] *Par.* xxxii. 83. [3] *Purg.* ix. 78.

and he detains outside that gateway the souls of those who die excommunicate, even if at the last they have made their peace with God.[1] It is quite certain that he is in the habit of following the Hours of the Church, from the manner in which he makes use of the prayers, hymns, and psalms belonging to these offices, with regard to the time of day at which they were recited, in every division of the poem. His answer to the questions addressed to him by St. Peter concerning the faith,[2] show how absolutely orthodox is his own personal creed, and how familiar he is with the writings of the great mediaeval theologians.

The real fact is this, to Dante, as to so many devout souls in all ages, had come the great Vision of the Church Militant here on earth; a true "Ecclesia," pure and undefiled, that should constantly set before humanity the purposes of the Most High, and weigh every cause brought before her in the balance of the sanctuary. With this lofty ideal in view the Poet could not but feel a sense of grief and shame when he turned to contemplate the Church of his own day and generation, and note, as he was bound to do, the low tone of morality that prevailed among the higher

[1] *Purg.* iv. 130. [2] *Par.* xxiv.

clergy, the worldliness of the rank and file of the priesthood, and the want of spirituality among the members of the religious orders. The best response to be made to those who would accuse him of a leaning towards schism or heresy is contained in his own words, written in one of his Epistles, "I have no fault to find with the Ark of the Covenant, but only with those oxen who are dragging it off the track."[1]

Leaving with some reluctance the Baptistery behind us, we cross the Piazza, and seek admission into the Duomo. The contrast between the exterior of the Cathedral, all glowing with marbles and mosaics under a southern sun, and the cold and bare interior is very disappointing, especially to the traveller familiar with the beauties of Northern Gothic architecture. Little is to be seen here that does not belong to a later age than that of Dante, and we can only glance at the famous fresco of the Poet on the north wall of the nave, as it must of necessity be reserved for consideration in the last chapter of this book. In spite of these facts, however, we should remember that the building we have entered is the successor

[1] Epistle viii.

of little old Santa Reparata, the church Dante knew in the days of his youth, and inherits the great traditions that belonged to the older edifice. The relics of San Zenobio rest under the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament in the apse, and on a pillar opposite the principal entrance is a picture of the school of Orcagna, representing the saintly Bishop vested in his episcopal robes, sitting on a throne, with his disciples, San Crescentius and Santo Eugenius, kneeling on either side.

We must also not omit to notice the monuments erected to the memory of the two first builders of the Duomo—Arnolfo and Giotto—both contemporaries of Dante. The earlier artist, "the Michael Angelo of the thirteenth century," as John Addington Symonds calls him, was highly honoured during his lifetime by the representatives of the City whose outward appearance he had so utterly transformed by the power of his genius. In the archives of Florence for the year 1300 is an entry stating that to Arnolfo del Cambio, "on account of his industry, his experience and his talent," was granted exemption from taxation, and a seat in the Signoria. He died a few months later, and he and his mother, Madonna Perfetta, who

one hopes lived long enough to recognize the glory of her famous son, were both laid to rest, as we know from an old obituary, in the vaults of the Duomo. Probably on account of the unfinished condition of the building, no memorial was put up to him at the time of his death, and succeeding generations of Florentines showed a singular lack of anxiety to make good this omission, and it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that the medallion we see before us in the north aisle came into existence.

Giotto, who in 1334 was appointed superintendent of the works of Santa Maria del Fiore, executed a portion of the first façade of the Cathedral, that façade which, unhappily destroyed in the sixteenth century, is commemorated in one of the frescoes by Pocetti in the outer cloisters of the Convent of San Marco. His monument in the south aisle, was placed here by Lorenzo dè Medici, the effigy, as sculptured by Benedetto da Maiano, not displaying to advantage the extreme ugliness of feature with which tradition has credited the father of Tuscan Art. In the closest proximity to the Duomo stands his great Campanile, "The Lily of Florence blossoming in stone,"[1] the foundations

[1] E. Barrett Browning.

of which were not laid until thirteen years after the Poet had passed away. Although it is most unlikely that he ever knew that the erection of this belfry was in contemplation, one cannot but feel that a spirit similar in character to that which inspired the *Divina Commedia* is manifested in the noble scheme of symbolic sculpture with which it is adorned. It is well known that Dante and Giotto were fast friends, and surely the mental development of the famous artist must have been greatly advanced by close intercourse with the man who possessed one of the most commanding intellects of his own, or indeed of any age.

To the left of the great western doorway stands a statue before which all Dantists must needs pause for a moment, for the subject here represented is Boniface VIII., the evil genius of the Poet, the Pontiff to whose machinations he owed, at least indirectly, his banishment from Florence, and all the misfortunes that accompanied his exile. The statue, which occupied a prominent position on the first and second façades of the Duomo, has been ascribed either to Arnolfo del Cambio or Andrea Pisano. The great Pope is shown seated on a throne, fully vested, and with a high tiara on his head, the broken arms, one of which was originally

Photo: Alinari.

STATUE OF POPE BONIFACE VIII. DUOMO.

uplifted in act of benediction, giving the figure a helpless and rather pathetic expression. There is no room for any sort of doubt as to the bodily semblance of the man Dante so fiercely hated, for this is the same face, perhaps a trifle idealized, that one meets alike on his sarcophagus in St. Peter's at Rome, and in the well-known fresco by Giotto in San Giovanni in Laterano. The designer of the statue, whoever he may have been, has not failed to render full justice to the well-cut regular features and slightly prominent ears of Dante's enemy, nor to indicate the great length of limb by which, as the chroniclers tell us, he was distinguished.

The History of Boniface VIII. might almost be compiled from the numerous references to him in the pages of the *Divina Commedia*, from the day of his birth at Anagni,[1] to that hour so fraught with sorrow to both Dante and Florence, when he despatched Charles of Valois to Tuscany.[2] He succeeded to the papacy in the year 1294, the year that saw Dante's entrance on the arena of political life in his native City. The latter regarded his election as invalid,

[1] *Par.* xxx. 148. [2] *Purg.* xx. 70.

both because his predecessor Celestine V. "He who made the great refusal,"

"Colui
Che fece per viltade il gran rifiuto,"[1]

was yet alive, and because in his anxiety to secure the triple tiara he had been guilty of acts resembling simony. He makes allusion to several of the most important events of the Pope's life, such as the feud he had maintained with the noble family of the Colonna,[2] the wrong he did to Guido da Montefeltro,[3] and the celebration of the first Papal Jubilee.[4] He also speaks with horror and indignation of his capture and imprisonment at Alagna,[5] by order of Philip IV. of France, and compares the suffering he then endured to those borne by Christ, thus showing it was the man, not the office, he detested. Finally he foretells the fate that awaits him in the other world,[6] a place in the "Bolgia" of the Simonists, where he will receive the fruit of those crimes by which he has defiled his high office.

It is but fair to the memory of the Poet to say that the estimate he formed of the character of Boniface VIII. differs very little from that of the writers who were his contemporaries. The

[1] *Inf.* iii. 60. [2] *Ibid.* xxvii. 85. [3] *Ibid.* xxvii. 70.
[4] *Ibid.* xviii. 29. [5] *Purg.* xx. 86. [6] *Inf.* xix. 53.

treachery, violence, and self-will displayed by this remarkable personage during the years of his pontificate, together with the miserable manner of his end, go far to justify the prophecy concerning him ascribed to his predecessor, that he would begin his reign as a fox, continue it as a lion, and die as a dog.

Apart from this statue no memorial of Boniface VIII. remains here, and there is no reason to suppose he ever visited Florence. In the Vescovado, to the west of the Duomo, lived his representative, Andrea dei Mozzi, Bishop of the City from 1287 to 1295. He was a member of a noble Florentine family, Bankers to the Papal Court, and the possessors of great wealth, who dwelt in the Piazza named after them in Oltrarno, opposite to Ponte alle Grazie. It is to him we owe the foundation of the Episcopal Palace close to San Miniato, which is still in existence, and he is said to have suggested to Folco Portinari the first idea of the building of the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova. Whatever may have been the benefits he conferred on his birthplace, they were more than counterbalanced by the evil example he set his flock, and at least on account of the unseemly manner of his life, he was, at the request it is said of his own

brother, removed from Florence. Boniface VIII. inflicted no punishment on him, but for the avoidance of further scandal simply translated him to the see of Vicenza, a circumstance to which Dante alludes in the fifteenth Canto of the *Inferno*.[1] He only survived his translation one year, and his body was brought back to Florence, and interred in the now destroyed Church of San Gregorio, which had been founded by his family, and stood close to their Palazzi. The mere fact that Dante passed a certain number of the more thoughtful years of his life under the pontificate of Boniface VIII., and the episcopacy of Andrea dei Mozzi, is surely a sufficient reason for the scathing censures he pronounces on the higher ecclesiastics of the Church in Italy.

Leaving the Duomo behind us we cross the Piazza, and passing the Baptistery, look at the exterior of the Archivescovado, as it is now called, the occupants of the see of Florence having attained to the higher dignity of the Archiepiscopate since the Poet's time. The building stands at the corner of the Via de' Cerretani, and is of great antiquity, as it dates from the eighth century. It was, however,

[1] *Inf.* xv. 112.

largely rebuilt by Alessandro de Medici, afterwards Pope Leo XI., and has since passed through such numberless vicissitudes that very little remains of the early Palazzo, the dwelling-place of so many of the Bishops of the City.

The original palace served on several occasions as the temporary home of the Countess Matelda, who, though she usually lived in the neighbouring town of Lucca, held her court in Florence. One of the ancient unglazed windows from which the heroine of the Earthly Paradise[1] may have looked out upon the world, survived until the year 1866, when it was unfortunately "restored" out of existence. There is yet preserved in the Archivescovado a document in which the Conte Guido, at her instigation, bequeathed certain lands to the canons of Santa Reparata, and she herself left a sum of money to the Guild of Wool for the benefit of the then Cathedral of Florence. Her territory comprised about a third of Italy, and Hildebrand persuaded her to will all her dominions to the Church.

Matelda was buried at Mantua, but in 1635 her relics were translated by order of Pope Urban VIII. to Rome. The fine monument to her memory in the north aisle of St. Peter's,

[1] *Purg.* xxviii.

[redacted]

Photo: Alinari.

MONUMENT TO THE COUNTESS MATELDA OF TUSCANY.
ST. PETER'S, ROME.

designed by Bernini, must be familiar to all Dantists who have had the good fortune to visit the Eternal City. On it, "la gran donna" is represented in a standing position, holding in her left hand the triple tiara and the papal keys, while extended in her right hand is the roll of parchment on which her legacy to the Holy See is inscribed. On the sarcophagus below is shown on a bas-relief the famous meeting between Pope Gregory VIII. and the Emperor Henry IV. at her castle of Canossa, while behind the principal actors in this most characteristic scene of the Middle Ages, stand, it is said, the figures of Dante and his Beatrice.

The accompanying epitaph describes her "as a woman worthy of eternal praise," a verdict with which the writer of the *Divina Commedia* would doubtless have been in complete agreement, though from a wholly different motive to that by which the seventeenth-century pontiff was inspired. To Dante she was indeed greatly to be honoured on account of her blameless life, her countless deeds of charity, and the many benefits she had bestowed on his native City, but the stern critic who saw in the so-called "Donation of Constantine"[1] the root of most of the ecclesiastical abuses of

[1] *Inf.* xix. 115.

Photo: Alinari.

MONUMENT TO THE COUNTESS MATELDA OF TUSCANY.
ST. PETER'S, ROME.

his day, could not have approved of Matelda's bequest to the See of Rome. Even so, however, he bestows on her the gift of a poetic immortality, that may possibly outlast other earthly fame, for at the close of the *Purgatorio* she serves as the herald of the Triumph of the Church,[1] and administers to the Poet that rite of Baptism in the river Lethe, by which alone he could be rendered "pure and disposed to mount unto the stars."

"Puro e disposto a salire alle stelle."[2]

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[1] *Purg.* xxxi. 100. [2] *Ibid.* xxxiii. 145.

CHAPTER IV

OR SAN MICHELE, THE BARGELLO, AND PALAZZO VECCHIO

"Men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
They learn in sorrow what they teach in song."
SHELLEY.

"To Heaven and Hell thy feet may win,
But thine own house they come not in."
D. G. ROSSETTI.

THE public life of the Poet before his exile is intimately associated with three of the most notable buildings remaining in Florence—the Bargello, as it is now called, Palazzo Vecchio, and the Church of Or San Michele. The first of these was formerly the residence of the Podestàs, or foreign rulers of the City; in the second the Priors of the people held their deliberations; the third—albeit of considerably later date than that of Dante—serves as the memorial of those "Arti," or trading guilds, that by his day had become an all-important element in the government of Florence.

It would be well to consider the last of these three buildings first, and think a little of the special significance attaching to the unique and beautiful church that stands in the Via Calzaioli. Or San Michele occupies a site that for many hundred years has been dedicated to the service of God—a chapel bearing the name of San Michele in Orto, or St. Michael in the garden, having been built here at a very early period. After the middle of the thirteenth century, this ancient chapel was cleared away to make room for a market for grain—an open Loggia, of brick—constructed after the design of Arnolfo del Cambio, and completed before the close of the year 1289.

Although primarily intended for secular purposes, the Loggia retained to a certain extent the sacred character of the building that had preceded it, for on one of the piers in the interior was placed a picture of the Madonna and Child, attended by angels, believed to be the work of Ugolino da Siena, a primitive painter. The picture is represented in an old MS. in the Biblioteca Laurenziana, set in a little shrine far above the heads of buyers and sellers, the space immediately below being occupied by the Clerk of the Market, busy with his accounts. For some unexplained reason this Madonna

was credited with miraculous powers, and every evening the members of a company of devout laymen assembled together under the Loggia, after the business of the day was over, to sing "Laudi" in her honour. Dante may have had these peaceful gatherings of his fellow citizens in mind when, after many years of absence from Florence, he wrote the *Purgatorio*, and showed the Souls in the Valley of Princes waiting until daybreak for the "great Vision of the guarded mount,"[1] in the act of singing the "Salve Regina,"[2] the proper hymn for Compline, the closing office of the Church.

Little by little the fame of Our Lady of Or San Michele spread through Tuscany, and pilgrims from far and near visited her shrine, bringing votive offerings. Dante's chief friend, Guido Cavalcanti, alludes in a sonnet, half ironically as it seems, to the wonders wrought by this marvellous image, demons being exorcised, the blind restored to sight, and the sick healed. Two years after Dante left Florence, a faction fight between the Cavalcanti and their allies, and certain other families of hostile political views, raged round Or San Michele, and the Loggia took fire from the surrounding houses and was burnt to the ground. The

[1] Milton. [2] *Purg.* vii. 82.

Photo: Alinari.

EXTERIOR OF CHURCH OF OR SAN MICHELE.

miraculous picture was saved from the flames, and carefully preserved, and in 1336 another Loggia, half grain market, half oratory, was begun, which forty years later was transformed into a church, when the open arcades were filled with tracery, and turned into windows. The chief interest of this new building, the present Or San Michele, lies in the fact that while the company of the "Laudesi" undertook the adornment of the interior of the Loggia, the exterior was handed over at the instance of the Guild of Silk Merchants to the Arti of the City. Their representatives decorated the pilasters that supported the roof with the images of their Patron Saints and coats of arms, and thus on the walls of the church before us we find graven in stone the most complete record as yet in existence of the once famous Guilds of Florence.

In the year 1235 these Guilds were thoroughly reorganized, their number being then fixed at one-and-twenty, and divided into seven Greater and fourteen Lesser Arts. The Judges and Notaries came first on the list of the Greater Guilds; after them followed the Dressers of Foreign Cloth, the Money Changers, the Wool Manufacturers, the Silk Merchants, the Doctors and Apothecaries, and the Skinners and Furriers.

To each of these more important Arts belonged a train-band, presided over by a Gonfalonière or Standard Bearer, forming collectively a large company of militia, ever ready to defend the rights of the bourgeoisie in times of civic disturbance. Included among the Lesser Arts were the Butchers, Builders, Innkeepers, and other retail traders of the City.

The feud that had existed for so many years between the Guilds and the Nobility only increased in intensity as time went on, and at last, by the year 1293, the former found themselves sufficiently powerful to exclude members of the latter altogether from the government of Florence, except under certain somewhat galling conditions. Through their influence a series of statues, called the "Ordinamenti della Giustizia," were passed by the Signoria, which provided that no nobleman should in the future hold any office in his native town without first renouncing the rank he held among the Grandi, and then enrolling himself in one of the Guilds. As Dante belonged by birth to a noble family, he was obliged, as a preliminary to his entrance into public life, to comply with these conditions. Accordingly, in 1295, he sought admission into the sixth of the Greater Arti, that of "Medici

e Speziali"—Doctors and Apothecaries. The entry of his matriculation in the Book of the "Sesta dell Arte Maggiore" is still extant. He is described as "Dante d'Aldighieri degli Aldighieri poeta Florentino."

The exterior walls of Or San Michele consist of fourteen pilasters connected by archways, thirteen of them bearing the insignia of thirteen different Guilds, while the fourteenth is devoted to that "Universita dei Mercanti," or board of magistrates which held supreme jurisdiction in all matters commercial in the City. The seven Greater Arts are all represented here, but from absence of space the emblems of eight out of the fourteen "Arti Minore" are of necessity omitted.

On the façade of the church that faces Via Calzaioli may be seen on either side of the beautiful group by Verrochio of Christ and St. Thomas, bronze statues of St. John Baptist and St. Luke the Evangelist, Patrons of the Guilds of the Dressers of Foreign Cloth, and the Judges and Notaries respectively, while the coats of arms of the same Guilds are displayed in "tondi"—circles—above the statues. The north side of the building is given up to four of the Lesser Arts, the Butchers, Shoemakers, Builders, and Armourers, the latter having been in the

past the proud possessors of the beautiful St. George of Donatello, now removed into the Bargello, a bronze copy occupying the vacant niche. The most notable of all the Guilds, the "Arte della Lana," the corporation of the Wool Merchants, finds a place on the western wall, the statue of St. Stephen, the Patron, being the work of Ghiberti; while close at hand are the insignia of the Arts of the Bankers and Money Changers and the Smiths and Ironworkers. The southern façade is occupied with representations of the emblems of the Flax Merchants, the Furriers and Skinners, and the great Arte della Seta, or Guild of Silk Merchants, the latter having St. John the Evangelist for Saint.

Last, but not least, on the same wall, is an empty shrine, formerly containing a figure of the Madonna, Patroness of the Guild to which the Poet nominally belonged. The statue that once stood there was removed into the church in the year 1630, where it may be seen over one of the side altars in the north aisle, an idea having somehow gained credence that on occasion the eyes of the figure moved. The original "tondo," a very lovely work by Luca della Robbia, is still *in situ*, and shows the coat of arms of the healing art, the Madonna and Child seated under an arch between two

Photo: Alinari.

TORRIONE OF THE GUILD OF WOOL.

pots of Annunciation Lilies. The University of Medici e Speziali stood in Mercato Vecchio in close proximity to San Tommaso, the official church of the Guild, and the consuls inhabited a handsome house in Via di Sant Andrea, that was destroyed only a few years ago, the ceiling of the Hall of Audience belonging to it being placed in the Museo San Marco. In Dante's time, as we learn from Villani, no less than sixty physicians and surgeons were practising in the City, while a hundred apothecaries dispensed drugs, mostly imported from the Levant, so there is every reason to suppose that the Guild was in a flourishing condition.

In spite of the very realistic description given of various forms of disease in the thirtieth Canto of the *Inferno*, it is unlikely that the writer of the *Divina Commedia* ever applied himself seriously to the study of medicine. His choice of this special Art may have been determined by the fact that the "Librai," or Booksellers, belonged to it, and that books were among the wares sold in the pharmacies of Florence. Forty years later a very minor poet, Matteo Palmieri, matriculated in the same Guild.

Dante appears to allude in the *Paradiso* to

Taddeo d'Alderotti,[1] the founder of the Florentine medical school, who cured Pope Honorius II. of the gout. This noted physician, the son of a cornchandler, was born in Florence in the year 1223, and studied at Bologna. He translated the Commentaries of Galen into the vulgar tongue, and displayed such a devotion to the works of Hippocrates, that Dante speaks of him as "I' Ippocratisto." He became a most successful practitioner in his birthplace, taking large fees from the well-to-do citizens, and leaving several disciples behind him. Notwithstanding the fame he acquired, there can be no doubt that the science of medicine was at a very low ebb in Italy during the Renaissance period. Violent remedies, such as cauterization and bleeding were resorted to on almost every occasion, and the prescriptions that have survived are of a most alarming character, more likely, one would think, to kill the unhappy patient than to mitigate his woes. Even as late as the year 1492 the physicians in attendance on Lorenzo de' Medici, having regard rather to the external circumstances of the Magnifico, than to the condition of his poor worn-out body, administered to him a potion composed of crushed rubies and pearls. These

[1] *Par.* xii. 83.

things being taken into consideration it was perhaps fortunate for the apothecaries that they also not unfrequently acted as undertakers to the community, scales of funeral charges being displayed in the "Spezierie" of the City.

Although there is comparatively little in the interior of Or San Michele that is of interest from the point of view of the Dantist, it must not be forgotten that Orcagna's Tabernacle was —so it is said—built round the old brick piers of Arnolfo's Loggia, and that enclosed within it is the miraculous image of the Madonna, before which the Poet and Guido Cavalcanti very probably sung "Laudi" together.

Having thus traced the manner in which Dante qualified himself for the holding of office in the City of his birth, we can now turn our thoughts to Palazzo Vecchio, or the Palace of the People, which stands in close proximity to the Uffizi, not far from the banks of the river. The Palazzo dates from the year 1298, and was intended to serve as the dwelling-place of the Priors, who had hitherto met together in a Palace of the Cerchi in Via della Condotta, where a portion yet remains, transformed into shops. Owing to the frequent disturbances in the City they did not feel themselves sufficiently

secure in their old quarters, and therefore Arnolfo del Cambio—that most useful servant of the Republic—was commissioned to design a suitable abode, where they could hold their deliberations undisturbed.

According to a well-known tradition, Arnolfo wished to place his new building on ground that had been previously occupied by the Palazzi of the Uberti—a famous family of Germanic descent, who had attained to great importance in the City of their adoption; but the authorities of Florence refused to comply with his request, saying that "where the traitor's nest had been, there the sacred foundations of the house of the people should not be laid." This tradition is of special interest, because the chief representative of this much-hated race, during the middle of the thirteenth century, was that Farinata degli Uberti who holds such a prominent position in the *Divina Commedia*, uprising from his burning tomb in the Circle of the Heretics, "come avesse l' Inferno in gran dispitto,"[1] as if in his pride he despised even the pains of Hell. He was the leader of the Ghibelline party and the organizer of measures that led to the defeat of the Guelphs at Montaperti, and the subsequent

[1] *Inf.* x. 36.

subjection of Florence to the rule of the Ghibellines.

The Florentines found it very difficult to forgive his conduct at this critical period of their history, and took the first opportunity of avenging themselves on his descendants after he had passed away, a year before the Poet's birth. When the Guelphs had once more regained the control of the City, the Uberti were expelled, being excluded by name from every act of amnesty granted to the faction to which they belonged, and the bones of their dead were disinterred and thrown into the river. It is even said that the citizens before the Altar of San Giovanni repeated in their litanies the petition, "That it may please Thee to root out and disperse the family of the Uberti," a practice to which Dante seems to allude when he says to Farinata, "Tale orazion fa far nel nostro tempio"[1]—"prayers of this nature were offered up in our temple."

It was not until a century after the death of Farinata that the inhabitants of Florence remembered the gratitude that was his due, for when, at the Council of Empoli (A.D. 1260), it was seriously proposed to destroy the City

[1] *Inf.* x. 87.

altogether, in order to maintain the ascendency of the Ghibelline cause in Tuscany, he alone defended her, openly, "a viso aperto."[1] As an act of tardy recognition of his patriotism, an effigy of him, believed to have been the work of Donatello, was placed on the second façade of the Duomo, and at the present day a modern statue of the "Saviour of Florence," guarding with his sword the emblematic "Giglio," or lily, looks out from a niche on the portico of the Uffizi, over the Arno.

If, as some writers hold, the tradition that connects the site occupied by Palazzo Vecchio with the Uberti cannot be substantiated, it is at least certain that among the buildings demolished to make room for the Palace of the People was San Piero Scheraggio—the church commonly attended by members of the Ghibelline faction—where Farinata and his friends used to worship. Thus, in any case, the very spot of ground where this fine Palazzo stands, is symbolical of the victory that the democracy had achieved, during the lifetime of the Poet, over the ancient aristocracy of Florence. The pulpit of the destroyed church—from which, it is said, Dante once addressed the members of the Consiglio del Popolo, on the occasion of an

[1] *Inf.* x. 93.

election of Priors—is preserved in San Leonardo in Arcetri, outside the Porta San Giorgio.

The exterior of Palazzo Vecchio is extraordinarily striking, the overhanging battlements and massive walls conveying to the beholder an impression of rude strength, not very usual so far south as Italy. The ground-plan of Arnolfo was a perfect parallelogram, but this was widely departed from at a later date, when more space was required. The newer additions are happily in the rear of the original building, and in consequence a large portion of the old palace, more particularly the façade that abuts on the Palazzo della Signoria, still bears the impress of the genius of the great architect of the thirteenth century. Below the deep brackets that support the upper gallery may be seen shields emblazoned with heraldic devices, among others the two variations of the coat of arms of Florence, which Dante mentions in the concluding lines of the sixteenth Canto of the *Paradiso*.[1] To the Poet, the white lily on the red field served as the symbol of early unity, while the red lily on the white field was a token of that disunion brought about by the perpetual struggles of the Guelph and Ghibelline factions. The Florentine "Giglio"

[1] *Par.* xvi. 154.

is, in reality, an iris, but, unlike the majority of the "fleurs de luce," it is always "seeded," that is, it has small seedheads between the three large petals of which it is composed. The connection of the "Giglio" with Dante's birthplace is fancifully united with the legend of Santa Reparata, but it probably came about from a play on the word "Florentia"—flowery—the iris being one of the most conspicuous wild flowers in that part of Tuscany.

The famous Campanile—the crowning glory of the Palace of the People—was, all but the upper story, the work of Arnolfo, who turned to account as superstructure an ancient tower belonging to the Foraboschi family. The great bell hung in this Campanile was popularly named "La Vacca," or, the Cow, and when, as was not unfrequently the case, it sounded forth a warning note to call the citizens to arms, men said to each other, in the common speech of Florence, "La Vacca mugghia"—"the cow lows"—such lowing being often the fatal preliminary to strife and tumult, bloodshed and death.

There is but little left in the interior of the Palace of the People that can in any way bring back the age of Dante, the Cortile having been redecorated in the sixteenth century, and the

Photo: Alinari.

EXTERIOR OF THE PALAZZO DEL POPOLO, WITH THE TOWER OF THE VACCA.

halls and rooms readorned under the Medicean rule. Still, it has an association with the public life of the Poet that is of enormous importance, for by the year 1300 the Signoria sat within its walls, and here Dante, having been elected to the office of Prior, spoke, gave his vote, and consulted with his colleagues on grave matters touching the welfare of the City.

No sooner had Dante enrolled himself in the corporation of Medici e Speziali than he became one of the Consuls of the Guild, and entered the political arena, taking part in the general council of the Commune. He was then thirty years of age, a married man, and the father of children, having a stake in the affairs of his native town, and willing to express his devotion to her by means of active service. He had already borne arms, so it is said, in her defence, having almost certainly been in the ranks of the combatants at the battle of Campaldino, that battle by which the rout of Montaperti was at last avenged. Leonardo Bruni expressly asserts that such was the case, and we might easily have come to the same conclusion after reading the marvellously vivid description given by the Poet of the pathetic circumstances that attended the death of

Buonconte da Montefeltro,[1] who was mortally wounded in the fray. If the letter quoted by Leonardo is authentic this was by no means Dante's first experience of warfare, for he tells us that at the date of the battle he was already "no child in arms," and it also seems likely from a passage in the *Inferno*, that he was present at that siege of Caprona[2] which followed closely on the victory of Campaldino.

It was during a time of storm and stress that Dante first took office under the Florentine Republic. With the passing of the Ordinamenti della Giustizia and the institution of a popular magistrate—the Gonfalonière or Standard Bearer of Justice—two years earlier, it might have seemed as if the long struggle between the Grandi and the Popolani had come to an end, and that from henceforth the government of the City would lie entirely in the hands of the democracy. The rule of the people lasted, however, but a short time, and was not productive of much peace, on account of the rivalry that existed between the author of the new statutes, Giano della Bella, and Dante's kinsman by marriage, Corso Donati. The former came of a noble house, and had the right to bear

[1] *Purg.* v. 88. [2] *Inf.* xxi. 95.

the quarterings of no less a hero than Count Ugo of Tuscany, but like an earlier Egalitè Orleans he abandoned his peers to their fate, and threw in his lot with the common herd, "col popol si rauni."[1] He was the owner of considerable ability and much strength of character, and for a few months carried everything before him. In March, 1295, just as he was proceeding to further reforms, his rule was overthrown by an insurrection in the City, largely brought about by the machinations of Corso Donati, and he was compelled to leave Florence, his possessions were confiscated, and his house half destroyed. He sought refuge in France, and died there.

Considerable disquiet prevailed in the City that he left, and the rich burgher class, the "Popolo Grosso," once more seized the reins of government, the nobles and the artizans alike being excluded from a share in it. The elevation of Cardinal Benedetto Gaietani to the throne of St. Peter, on Christmas Eve, 1294, under the title of Boniface VIII., was also an event of sinister import for the well-being both of Dante and of his birthplace.

The year 1300, the year of the first Papal

[1] *Par.* xvi. 131.

Jubilee, and the ideal date of the *Divina Commedia*, proved, though he then knew it not, to be the turning point in the Poet's history. Without accepting too literally Boccaccio's statement that no important question was settled in Florence without his opinion, there seems to be no doubt that by this time the force of his intellect had made itself felt, and his contemporaries recognized his fitness for a definite share in the government. On the seventh of May he was sent as ambassador to the neighbouring town of San Gemignano to speak on behalf of the Guelph league of Tuscany, an embassy he appears to have discharged in a most creditable manner. On June the fifteenth he attained to the summit of Florentine ambition, being, in common with five other citizens, chosen out from among the Consuls of the Arti, to sit as Prior in the Signoria. To this event, which under more favourable circumstances would have been one of happy augury, he attributed in after-life all the misfortunes that befell him.

Just before his election to the priorate a fresh development had occurred in those internal dissensions that had for so long devastated Florence, and it was this fact which rendered the acceptance of office so fatal to him. The

low-born family of the Cerchi[1] had for some time been engaged in a deadly feud with their more aristocratic neighbours the Donati, and as so often happened during the Middle Ages, a grave public situation was speedily evolved out of what had probably been in the first instance a mere private quarrel. The celebration of the customary May Day festivities was the signal for literal warfare between the two hostile houses and their adherents, and blood actually flowed in Piazza Santa Trinità.

From that hour the Guelphs of Florence, not content with their perennial differences with the Ghibellines, found themselves divided into two opposing camps, under the leadership respectively of Vieri dei Cerchi and Corso Donati, both of whom had fought at Campaldino on the patriotic side. The new factions assumed the names of Bianchi and Neri, titles that had originated in the town of Pistoia, then subject to Florence, the first having their headquarters in a palace belonging to the Cerchi in Via della Condotta, the second in that Palazzo della Parte Guelfa which still looks down on Via delle Terme.

The Bianchi, with whom Dante and Guido

[1] *Par.* xvi. 65.

Cavalcanti alike associated themselves, were in favour of the rule of the Signoria; the Neri wished, on the contrary, to wrest the government from the burgher class altogether, and hand it over to the aristocracy of Florence. Unable to achieve their purpose without external assistance, the Neri entered into an alliance with Boniface VIII., who, only too delighted at a pretext for interference, promptly sent into Tuscany as Legate, Cardinal Matteo d'Acquasparta. This prelate was the Vicar General of the Franciscans, to whom Dante alludes somewhat slightingly in the *Paradiso*,[1] on account of the relaxations he had permitted in the Rule of the Order. He came nominally as a "paciere," or peacemaker, but in reality acted in the interest of Corso Donati and his party, with the intention of bringing Florence under the direction of the Pope. This happened during the term of Dante's priorate, and it fell to his lot to receive and entertain the Legate, but he evidently realized to the full the true meaning of the Cardinal's visit, and was at one with his fellow Priors in their refusal to accept his arbitration. Finding that his mission was a failure, the Legate returned to Rome, leaving Florence under an interdict,

[1] *Par.* xii. 124.

and it is believed denounced Dante to his master as an enemy of the Papal Power.

Things went from bad to worse in the unhappy city after his departure, and at last, on account of the perpetual disturbances brought about by the rival factions, the Signoria determined to send into exile the most turbulent partizans on either side, with the result that Corso Donati and his great antagonist, Guido Cavalcanti, found themselves included in the sentence of banishment. Dante would hardly have been human if he had not had a certain sense of satisfaction in recording the vote he possessed against Corso Donati—the man he had every reason to dislike and distrust. On the other hand, one cannot but believe that it must have grieved him to the heart to exercise his authority in the case of Guido Cavalcanti, even if he were convinced that the absence of his friend would contribute to the public weal.

Guido Cavalcanti belonged to a noble and ancient house, second to none among the aristocracy of Florence. He was born about the year 1250, and was a son of Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti, a well-known leader of the Guelph party, and a noted sceptic, who, as a penalty of his want of faith, is placed by Dante in one of the flaming sepulchres of the Circle of the

Heretics in the *Inferno*.[1] Guido followed the civil traditions of his father, and took a part in the government of the Republic during the period of the Guelph rule. In 1280 he acted as one of the sureties for the Sestiere of San Piero Scheraggio, his own quarter, on the occasion of the mission of Cardinal Latino, and four years later sat on the grand council of the Commune, in company with Dante's preceptor, "Ser Brunetto."

When only nine years of age he was married to Beatrice, or Bice, daughter of Farinata degli Uberti, a union dictated by political motives that is not supposed to have been productive of much happiness to either himself or his wife. Guido's name was certainly associated in after years with at least two other ladies, Giovanna of Florence—the "Primavera" of the *Vita Nuova* —and Mandetta of Thoulouse, and it is not impossible that the Poet may have had the disagreements of this ill-assorted couple in mind when he so vehemently declaimed against the early marriages that were of such frequent occurrence in his own day.[2]

The intellectual powers of Guido were of a very high order, Boccaccio assures us that he

[1] *Inf.* x. 53. [2] *Par.* xv. 104.

was "one of the best logicians in the world, and a most excellent natural philosopher," and we know from the specimens of his verse that have come down to us that he was endowed in no small degree with the poetic gift. Like his father he is said to have been tainted with scepticism, a supposition that would account for Dante's allusion to his lack of respect for Virgil,[1] whose writings bear witness to the strong faith of their author in things unseen. At the same time he appears to have conformed outwardly to the religious observances of his age, manifesting a certain measure of devotion to the miraculous image of Or San Michele, and even undertaking a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James.

By temperament he was proud and impetuous, impatient of contradiction, prone to take offence, and something of a cynic in his dealings with his fellow men. A story is told of him that well illustrates his attitude of mind towards those whom he despised. He happened one evening to be passing through the Piazza of Santa Reparata, where he encountered a band of noisy youths, who followed him, entreating him to join in their revels. He indignantly refused, and leaping over one of the sarcophagi

[1] *Inf.* x. 63.

that at that time surrounded the Old Baptistery out-distanced his pursuers telling them that they by reason of their folly belonged to the dead, while he, thanks to his love of study and contemplation, had a place among the living.

His natural refinement of disposition probably partly accounts for the violent antipathy that existed between him and that very unrefined personality, Corso Donati, an antipathy which before the close of the political struggle in which they were both engaged became positively murderous. Corso attempted to assassinate his enemy during the time of his pilgrimage, and Guido as soon as he returned to Florence attacked the former in the streets of the City. The Signoria surely judged wisely when they determined to expel from their boundaries, in the interest of peace, the two inveterate foes, neither of whom could have been sent away in justice without the other.

The close intimacy between Dante and Guido Cavalcanti dates from the year 1283, and was doubtless the result not only of a similarity of literary tastes, but also of a natural austerity of temperament common to both, that while drawing them together, tended to separate them from the ordinary light-hearted, pleasure-loving Florentines. It seems probable that

Guido acted as confidant to his friend during the days of his early romance, that the *Vita Nuova* was dedicated to him, and that he was the first to suggest that the *Divina Commedia* should be written in Italian rather than in Latin. Whatever may be the truth of these suppositions, he certainly has a share in the honour due to those who created the "dolce stil nuovo"—that school of poetry in the Lingua Volgare, the patois of Tuscany, that the greatest Poet of the age was about to render immortal. Not a few of Guido's poems were addressed to Dante, and we know that the writings of the older man exercised a profound influence over him, for as Rossetti points out, on more than one occasion he places lines borrowed from them, very slightly altered, among the music of his own matchless verse in the pages of the *Commedia*.

It is sad that a friendship founded on a mutual love of all that was beautiful should have suffered an eclipse just as it was about to be ended, so far as this world is concerned, by the hand of death. The place, Sarzana, to which Guido, in company with the rest of the Bianchi, was exiled, was notoriously unhealthy, and he fell ill of malaria almost immediately, returning to Florence only to die a few weeks later.

No record has come down to us of any reconciliation that may have taken place between the brother poets, but it seems certain that Dante ever cherished in after-life a kindly memory of the man whom in happier days he had called, "primo de' miei amici"—the first of my friends. We seem to hear an echo of the grief he experienced at his premature departure, in that wonderful passage of the *Inferno* where the elder Cavalcanti from his burning tomb inquires if his son is already numbered among the dead.

"Non viv' egli ancora?
Non fiere gli occhi suoi lo dolce lome."[1]

Not only so, but when in the *Purgatorio* Dante shows the uncertainty of human fame, he recalls to mind the writings of the friend of his youth, and would have his readers remember that by his poetic skill he had taken from "l' altro Guido"—Guido Guinicelli of Bologna—"la gloria della lingua[2]"—the glory of the Italian tongue.

But small trace of the once illustrious house of Cavalcanti remains in modern Florence. Guido himself was buried in the precincts of the Duomo, but no monument marks the place

[1] *Inf.* x. 68. [2] *Purg.* xi. 97.

of his rest. The Palazzi of the family occupied much space both in Mercato Nuovo and in a street bearing their name, now merged in Via Porta Rossa, but nearly all their possessions were destroyed in the disastrous fire that wrecked the earlier Loggia of Or San Michele, and only a single house in the New Market survives.

In one of the dwellings belonging to them lived in Dante's day a notable character in the *Divina Commedia*, their kinswoman Cunizza,[1] the sister of that cruel tyrant Ezzolino da Romano,[2] who was popularly said to be the familiar friend of Satan. After a youth devoted to amorous adventure, brought about, as she tells the Poet, by the influence of Venus, she reformed, and gave herself up to prayers and works of charity, and it is possible that Dante's personal knowledge of the penitence that accompanied her old age may be the reason why she is to be found in the ranks of the saved in Paradise, while other spirits, less guilty than herself, suffer either in Purgatory or in the Inferno. During the time that she dwelt in the City she made a will by which she set at liberty many of the serfs of the

[1] *Par.* ix. 32. [2] *Inf.* xii. 110.

family, for the salvation of her own soul, and those of her father and mother and of her two brothers, one of whom was Ezzolino.

The second act in the great tragedy of Dante's life followed closely on the death of Guido Cavalcanti. Corso Donati took himself to Rome directly after sentence of exile had been pronounced on him, for the purpose of beseeching Boniface VIII. to interfere once more on behalf of the party of which he was leader. Boniface, only too willing to comply with this request, dispatched without delay to Florence, as his envoy, Charles of Valois, brother of the French King, who entered the City on All Saints Day in the year 1303. Like Cardinal d'Acquasparta, he came in the character of a peacemaker, but, as was well known, the true object of his mission was nothing less than the discomfiture of the Bianchi, and the placing of the government of the Commune in the hands of the Neri. In the Church of Santa Maria Novella he first took a solemn oath to do all in his power for the maintenance of peace, and then immediately afterwards "jousting with the lance of Judas"[1] treacherously armed his followers, the better to be able to coerce his political opponents, while he permitted Corso

[1] *Purg.* xx. 74.

Donati to break open the prisons, and pillage and spoil the Palazzi of the Bianchi. Having by main force got the upper hand in the City he expelled the "White" members from the Signoria, setting up in their place citizens chosen from the ranks of the "Black" party, while, under his direction, a new Podestà, of like proclivities to himself—Cante de' Gabrielli, a native of Gubbio—was appointed.

This sudden revolution brought disaster in its train to a large number of the prominent Bianchi, and to none more than the Poet, who had rendered himself obnoxious to the new rulers by his persistent opposition to the Papal policy, and especially by a refusal to give his official sanction to subsidies paid by Florence to Charles of Valois. He was thus singled out for vengeance, and on January the twenty-seventh in the following year the new Podestà condemned him to pay a fine of five thousand lire, on a wholly imaginary charge of peculation during the time of his priorate. A few months later (March the tenth), on his failure to appear before the tribunal of Cante de' Gabrielli, he was sentenced to be burnt alive—"Igne comburatur sic quod moriatur"—if he should come under the jurisdiction of the Republic. This

decree was never repealed, and for the remainder of his life Dante lay under sentence of death, and death in a form most appalling to the imagination. Very seldom in the course of his Mystic Journey does the Poet confess to a sense of terror as regards his own personal safety, and it is probably some haunting memory of the fate that might yet await him that inspires that passage of the *Purgatorio* where he represents himself as shrinking in agony from the wall of flame that separates him from Beatrice and Heaven. The actual text of both the sentences pronounced on him may yet be read in the *Libro di Condanne*, the official record of the pains and penalties inflicted by the state on the law-breakers of Florence.

It is not quite certain if Dante witnessed the entrance into the City of Charles of Valois. Leonardo Bruni tells us that he was at that time absent in Rome, having been sent as Ambassador to the Pope by the "White" party, and that Boniface purposely delayed his return, until his ruin was an accomplished fact. He recorded his vote, as one of the Consuls of the Arti, for the last time in September the twenty-eighth, 1301, and before February, 1302, he had undoubtedly left his birthplace, never

to return. By order of the Florentine authorities, his house in Via Santa Margherita was sacked after his departure, and Boccaccio Adimari, who had a grudge against him, is said to have appropriated all his goods, with the exception of those objects of value that Gemma was able to save with the assistance of her friends. From henceforth, to the day of his death, there was no place for Dante in Florence, and he wandered up and down the highways and byways of Italy, "pellagrino quasi mendicando"—"a pilgrim, almost a beggar"—spending a few months here and there, and tasting to the full the bitterness of exile.

The most interesting memorial that has come down to us of Dante's political life is contained in the interior of the Bargello, the last of the three buildings that we are considering in this chapter. It lies not far away from the Palace of the People, at the corner of the Via Ghibellina, almost exactly opposite the principal entrance to the Badia. It is a massive fabric of grey stone, with Gothic windows, projecting battlements, and a small and rather stumpy tower. It was already standing in Dante's time, having been begun in 1255, during the period of the first

democratic government of Florence, and was primarily intended to serve as a dwelling for the Captain of the People, the head of the National Guard. It is doubtful, however, if this personage ever inhabited it, and in course of time it became the official home of the Podestà, or chief magistrate of the City, who had hitherto either dwelt in the Vescovado or in the Torre della Castagna, the tower that overlooks the Casa di Dante.

This magistrate was required, in the interests of peace, to be a foreigner, in the hope, by no means always realized, that he would be actuated in his judgments by a spirit of greater impartiality than would have been possible to a Florentine. It was further demanded of him that he should come of gentle blood, and be a Catholic in religion, and a Guelph in politics. Many restrictions were imposed on him during his term of office, which lasted for the space of one year. He was not permitted to bring with him from his native town his wife, children, or other relatives; he was strictly forbidden to accept presents, to eat or drink with the citizens, or have any familiar intercourse with them. The supreme power in all temporal matters he enjoyed probably compensated him for these

somewhat burdensome conditions, for in time of peace he was virtually president of the Florentine Republic, and as soon as war was declared he became the general of the forces of the Commune.

The original design for the Palazzo del Podestà was the work, as Vasari tells us, of Arnolfo di Lapo, but it was probably modified later by the two Dominican Friars who constructed the Church of Santa Maria Novella. By the year 1282 it was sufficiently finished for the magistrate and his counsellors to meet for consultation in the "loggia which led into the great hall." Since the time of Dante this old building had passed through many changes and vicissitudes, the beautiful cortile and staircase, for example, were not completed till long after the Poet had left this earth, but the façade facing the Via Proconsolo has not been very greatly changed, and the tower with which he must have been familiar still looks down over the City that he loved. The Bargello, or head of the police, resided here during the fifteenth century, and of late years the building has been turned into a public museum.

Entering the ancient dwelling of the Podestàs, and ascending to the second story,

it would be well to pause an instant in the Sala di Donatello, once the great council chamber of the Republic, for it was here that Dante spoke on July the sixth, 1295, in favour of some proposed alterations in the recently passed statutes, those "Ordinamenti della Giustizia" that pressed so heavily on the order to which he belonged. Close at hand is a room originally constructed to serve as the private chapel of the Podestàs, and dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene. Soon after the erection of this chapel the walls were adorned with frescoes, painted by Giotto, or, as some critics believe, by Taddeo Gaddi, one of his pupils. About the middle of the seventeenth century it was dismantled and transformed into a prison for criminals condemned to death, and the frescoes were covered with plaster. For two hundred years the lost paintings were to all intents and purposes forgotten, although it was well known from the writings of Vasari that under the plaster on the east wall a portrait of Dante lay concealed.

This strange indifference on the part of the Florentines with regard to the representation of their Divine Poet lasted until the year 1850, when an Englishman, Mr. Seymour Kirkup,

Photo: Alinari.

PORTRAIT OF DANTE IN THE BARGELLO, BEFORE THE RE-PAINTING.

and Signor Bezzi, of Florence, obtained permission from the Italian Government to remove the plaster at their own expense. Their efforts were crowned by the discovery of the portrait, but in a very damaged condition, one eye having been injured by a nail driven into the wall for the support of some scaffolding. The utmost excitement reigned in the City as soon as the discovery was known, and "L'abbiamo, il nostro Poeta"—"Our Poet has returned to us"—was the cry of the delighted Florentines; but the authorities showed themselves incapable of taking care of the treasure thus unexpectedly restored to them, and actually ordered an artist named Marini to repaint the portrait. The figure of Dante had been clothed in garments of red, white, and green, the colours in which Beatrice appears in the Earthly Paradise,[1] symbolical of the three Christian graces, but the green was changed into chocolate in the repainting as the "combination of colours was regarded as democratic and dangerous."

In spite of the ravages brought about by this terrible "restoration," it is impossible not to feel greatly moved when one stands before the image of the Poet, and to many Dantists this ruined fresco is perhaps the most precious relic

[1] *Purg.* xxx. 31.

of their hero that the ages have spared to them. We see him there, just as he appeared before he went away into exile, a stern figure, thirty-five years of age, "nel mezzo del camin di nostra vita"[1]—in the midst of the pathway of this our mortal life—habited in the lucco and berretta of the Florentine magistrate, with a book, possibly the *Vita Nuova*, under one arm, while he holds in his hand a pomegranate, type of life and suffering. The *Divina Commedia* seems hidden behind the face, as Fitzgerald remarks, "like the flower in the bud," and we can discern in the features both the austerity of mind and the rare tenderness of heart displayed in the greatest of Christian epics.

This portrait forms part of a large painting of Paradise, in which the Saviour is shown in glory, seated on a throne, reigning over the Blessed who stand immediately below Him. There are differences of opinion as to the exact date of the fresco, and on that date the identification of the "Beati" depends, but according to a recent and not improbable theory, it was designed during the later weeks of the year 1301, and thus serves as a record of the transient peace that followed on the mission of Charles of Valois, while the City lay stunned beneath

[1] *Inf.* i. 1.

the weight of his hand, before the prescription of the Bianchi commenced.

If the riddle of the fresco had been read aright, Leonardo Bruni's assertion notwithstanding, Dante must have been present at that time in Florence, and the figure of the man, heading a procession of citizens, and wearing a coroneted cap over his long hair, would be the Papal Envoy, Charles of Valois, that singularly weak and vain prince who was always trying to secure a crown, and always without success. His countrymen said of him that he was "fils de roi, frère de roi, oncle de trois rois, père de roi, et jamais roi," while the Italians gave him the title of "Carlo Sanzaterra" (Charles Lackland), a nickname Dante evidently had in mind when he warns him in the *Purgatorio*,[1] that no gain in territory would come to himself from his expedition to Florence. On the left of the fresco is a Cardinal, Matteo d'Acquasparta, it is believed, who joined Charles of Valois by command of the Pope, towards the close of the same year, and was strongly antagonistic to the Poet, as might have been expected considering the hatred entertained for him by his master, Boniface VIII.

If Vasari is to be trusted, the figures on either

[1] *Purg.* xx. 76.

hand of Dante are Brunetto Latini and Corso Donati, the face of the latter being sufficiently well preserved for us to note the small cunning eyes and close-shut mouth of the famous leader of the "Neri." As the head of the Donati family, Corso was a person of no small importance among his contemporaries, and successively filled the office of Podestà in Bologna, Pistoia, and Treviso. He took as his first wife a member of the Cerchi family, who died suddenly, not without suspicion of poison, and then married a daughter of Ugguccione della Faggiuola, the great Ghibelline Captain. He had no lack of ability, but the insolence he displayed in his dealings with all sorts and conditions of men, alienated even his adherents, and the Florentine populace bestowed on him the title of "Malefami," "Do me harm."

Charles of Valois left him in possession in Florence, at his departure, but his overbearing conduct gave universal offence, and at last he was charged by the Priors with conspiring against the Commonwealth in company with his father-in-law, Ugguccione, and summoned to appear before the Podestà. On his refusal to obey he was condemned as a traitor, and the forces of the Commune were dispatched to arrest him, but he shut himself up in that Tower of

the Corbizzi family (that yet stands in the Via del Mercantino close to the Church of San Piero Maggiore), and for a few hours defied the authorities. At length he was compelled to flee, and met his death outside the Porta alla Croce, "dragged at the heels of an infuriated beast,"[1] as his own brother tells us, and slain at length by the hands of a hireling soldiery at the bidding of the Signoria. In the words of the historian, Dino Compagni, "his life was perilous, and his death was blameworthy."

If the interpretation suggested of the inner meaning of this fresco is correct, the value of it for our present purpose is redoubled, for in addition to the portrait of the Poet, we have before our eyes, but dimly it is true, the outward semblance of the three men who at the turning point of his life exercised such a malign influence over his subsequent fate, Charles of Valois, Cardinal d'Acquasparta, and Corso Donati.

In the halls of the Bargello may be seen many interesting objects dating from the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century, and these serve to bring back to mind the domestic life of Florence

[1] *Purg.* xxiv. 83.

during the years that her great son dwelt within her walls. Surpassing all these in importance is a plaster cast of the face of the Poet, taken, it is said, from a death-mask prepared by order of Guido da Polenta, his host at the time of his decease. Allowing for the difference of age it greatly resembles the portrait in the chapel, and thus in the same building we have two likenesses of Dante, the one showing him just as he appeared before his exile, the other when that exile had terminated with his earthly existence. As a last thought in connection with the political life of the Poet it must not be forgotten that from the gates of the Bargello issued, as Gardner tells us, "the Crier of the Republic who summoned Dante and his companions in misfortune to appear before the Podestà's court."

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCHES OF THE FRIARS

"C'est dans l'eglise de Santa Maria Novella qu'il faut chercher Dante à Florence."—AMPÈRE.

"Dante saw clearly that the voluntary poverty of the Friars was the most helpful gift that the mediaeval Church had given to the world."—RUSKIN.

THE Churches of the Friars in Florence are bound up with the memory of Dante by a chain of very precious associations, for they owe their existence to that stirring of the Christ life in the Church of God that he celebrates so beautifully in two of the most striking Cantos of the *Paradiso.* St. Francis and St. Dominic ran their course just a hundred years before the Poet's day, and none of his contemporaries realized more clearly than he did the far-reaching effect of the revival they initiated, and also the fact that by the close of the thirteenth century the ideals that they had set before the world had already been in a great measure forgotten by their spiritual descendants.

It is in the Heaven of the Sun that Dante finds the souls of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventura, the representatives among theologians of the Dominicans and Franciscans respectively, and from them he hears the panegyrics of the two Saints, each with a generosity rare among Religious, singing the praises of the Founder of the rival order. It is in lines full of poetic feeling that St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, relates the story of the life of St. Francis, the Seraphic Father, from the time of his birth at Assisi to that glorious hour when among the mountains of Alverno he received from Christ the "last seal"—"l'ultimo sigillo"[1]—of fellowship with Himself—

> "Such that the Master's very wounds were stamped,
> Upon his flesh."[2]

The Seraphic Doctor then takes up his parable, and in words of almost equal beauty recites the history of the Angelic Father, Dominic—"l'amoroso drudo della fede cristiana"[3]—the passionate lover of the Faith of Christ, he who had been chosen from among mankind to aid his Lord in the cultivation of the Garden of the Church.

As every one knows, the chief characteristic

[1] *Par.* xi. 107. [2] J. H. Newman. [3] *Par.* xii. 55.

of the mendicant orders was the absolute acceptance of the precept of voluntary poverty, not only as it concerned the individual Friars, but also every detail of their corporate life. That Dante appreciated to the full the immense importance of this innovation is evident to all readers of the *Commedia* who are familiar with the exquisite passage where he describes the Mystical Marriage[1] of St. Francis with his bride Poverty—

> "Si che dove Maria rimase giuso,
> Ella con Cristo salse in su la croce"[2]

—"She who mounted with Christ on the Cross, while Mary stayed beneath."

An age like his own, when luxury and avarice were the distinguishing vices of the clergy as a body, even the Vicars of Christ seldom escaping the general contagion, needed a striking example of self-restraint in the matter of this world's goods.

The chief Dominican Church of Florence is Santa Maria Novella, situated in the Piazza of the same name, a little to the south-west of the old Baptistery. The building was begun in 1278, from the design of three of the Friars, the foundation stone being laid by Cardinal

[1] *Par.* xi. 64. [2] *Ibid.* xi. 71.

Latino de Frangipani, himself a Dominican, and not impossibly a kinsman of the Poet. By the year 1301 the church must have been at least roofed in, for it was here that Charles of Valois took his famous oath to preserve the liberties of the Commune, an oath broken almost in the act of utterance. Before the construction of the new walls of the City by Arnolfo, the site where it stands was outside the boundaries of Florence, and the title of the older church that it replaced is in accordance with this circumstance, for it was called "Santa Maria tra le Vigne"—"St. Mary among the Vineyards"—so closely did town and country approach each other in the time of Cacciaguida. The Piazza of Santa Maria Novella was laid out at the close of the thirteenth century, just before Dante went into exile, and during those wonderful years when the Florence known to us was gradually brought into being.

The church is a fine example of Italian Gothic, built in the form of a Tau Cross, the transverse bar fringed with chapels extending on either side of the apse behind the High Altar. The nave is wide and unencumbered with monuments, for the Friars were the great preachers of the Middle Ages, and much space was needed for the crowds who flocked

to listen to the sermons delivered here on all special occasions.

The fine façade of the building, rich in marble panelling, is of too late a date to have any associations with the age of Dante, so we pass into the interior, enter the right-hand transept, and ascend the steps leading up into the Strozzi Chapel. Here we are at once in the atmosphere of the *Divina Commedia*, for Andrea and Leonardo Orcagna, the artists who adorned it with frescoes, not only drew their inspiration from the school of religious thought to which Dante was so much indebted, but even borrowed not a few of the details of their designs directly from the great poem. The chapel is dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas, the panegyrist of St. Francis of Assisi, and the Master Theologian of the Roman Church, whose presentment of Christian dogma is so faithfully reflected in the works of Dante that he himself has been called "the Poetic Aquinas." The lives of these two giants in different spheres of intellectual activity slightly overlapped, for the Poet was nine years of age when St. Thomas passed away —the victim, so the former believed, of the malice of Charles of Anjou[1] — a strange allegation for which, as all historians are

[1] *Purg.* xx. 68.

now agreed, there is no foundation whatever in fact.

The altar-piece is the work of Andrea Orcagna, the more skilful of the brother painters, and here the Saviour is represented delivering to St. Peter the keys, and to St. Thomas the *Somma*, his famous book, passages from which are frequently paraphrased by Dante. Around the altar-piece the Last Judgment is shown in fresco. The Judge is enthroned; the Apostles and the Angels with trumpets await His verdict; the newly risen dead part to right and left, anticipating their sentence; while the Madonna pleads for mercy on the saved, and St. John Baptist seems to demand the execution of justice on the lost. It is a weird scene, such as the stern Florentine might well have conceived, and where, if tradition can be trusted, he does himself figure, for among the ranks of the Redeemed is seen an upturned face, framed in a berretta, whose features bear so touching a resemblance to those of Dante that the likeness can hardly be accidental.

On the wall to the right of the altar Leonardo Orcagna has depicted the Hell of the Lost, taking Dante's *Inferno* for text-book. Enthroned in the middle of the fresco is Lucifer,

Photo: Alinari.

TRADITIONAL PORTRAIT OF DANTE, BY ORCAGNA.
SANTA MARIA NOVELLA.

the fallen Archangel transformed by the power of God into a minister of that very system of law and order against which he had once rebelled. On all sides stretch away the "Bolgie," or pits, where punishment is meted out to the sinner according to his sin. As Ampère says, "Ici se rétrouve toute la topographie de l'enfer Dantesque," and it is fascinating to look closely at the painting and search out those incidents actually taken from the *Commedia*. For example, in the "Bolgia" of the Violent, the Centaurs, half horse, half man, the brute and human natures commingled, pursue their victims with bows and arrows,[1] while in that sad valley where the suicides share the fate of Daphne, the harpies prey on the living trees.[2]

On the opposite wall of the chapel, marvellous in contrast, the other brother wrought out his *Paradiso*, a glorious vision of the Heaven of Heavens that Dante visited at the end of his mystic journey, when he had travelled from "time to eternity, from things present to things to come, from Florence to a people just and sane."

"Al divino dall' umano,
Ed all' eterno dal tempo venuto
E di Fiorenza in popol giusto e sano."[3]

[1] *Inf.* xii. 73. [2] *Ibid.* xiii. 101. [3] *Par.* xxxi. 37.

It was, perhaps, inevitable from the nature of the subject that this fresco should be less a transcription of the ideas of the Poet than the *Inferno*, though portions of it recall certain detached passages from his works. Among other differences of treatment, Orcagna had no hesitation in depicting the outward semblance of the Saviour of mankind, while Dante's reverence caused him to abstain from any presentment of the "Lord of Glory,"[1] save under type and symbol.

Descending the steps into the nave we seek out the entrance to the cloisters, which, from the lack of orientation so usual in Italy, lie westward of the church. Here in the midst of the Chiostro Verde, so called from the green-tinted frescoes that line the walls, stands the Capella degli Spagnuoli, formerly the Chapter House of the Convent. This chapel was begun in the year 1320, twelve months before Dante departed this life, and the interior, more than a century later, was frescoed by the hands of certain unknown artists. Looking upon the splendid series of paintings with which the Council Chamber of the Friars was adorned, we once more drink deeply of the stream of scholastic theology that finds noble expression

[1] *V. N.*

in the pages of the *Divina Commedia.* The "Pictor Ignotus," probably himself a Dominican, responsible for this design, gave to the world nothing less than a pictorial representation of the entire system of religious doctrine and practice as taught by the Friars and accepted by Dante.

In this vaulted room are depicted the Mysteries of Redemption and the Mysteries of Grace, together with a striking illustration of the subjection of all human knowledge to the Obedience of the Church, so often suggested in the writings of the Poet. Although the hand of the craftsman failed him more than once when he came to carry out the designs of the Master Painter, and the frescoes have suffered not a little from neglect and restoration, they are still a treasure house to all who would feel the spell of the Middle Ages, an attitude of mind entirely necessary for those who follow in the footsteps of the great Tuscan.

Entering the chapel, immediately above the High Altar rises a representation of the Crucifixion of the Lord, that central act of the Passion that Dante beholds transfigured in the Heaven of Mars, together with the Procession to Calvary and the Descent into Hades. Following on the events of the Holy Week come those

of Easter-tide, for on two of the four segments of the roof are shown the Resurrection and Ascension of the Saviour—"Christ now risen from His lowly grave," "Gia surto fuor della sepolcral buca,"[1] and His triumphant return, "Nel reame ove gli angeli hanno pace,"[2] "to the Kingdom where the Angels are at peace."

The Mysteries of Redemption thus brought to a conclusion, the Mysteries of Grace succeed, for the Birth of the Church, as symbolized by the outpouring of the Spirit upon the Apostles, immediately follows. The fourth and last segment of the roof is occupied by "la Barca di Pietro,"[3] the Ship of the Fisherman, type of that Ark of Mercy into which the Redeemed are admitted by Holy Baptism.

Below this fresco to the right is a great painting, whose purpose is the setting forth the relation of the Baptized to the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant. In this remarkable picture Santa Maria del Fiore, the beautiful Duomo of the Florentines, serves as the image of the Church at war, while in front of the familiar building sit Pope and Emperor, ideal rulers, according to the "De Monarchia," of the bodies and souls of men. And around these central figures are noble groups of priests

[1] *Purg.* xxi. 9. [2] *V. N.* xxxii. 3. [3] *Par.* xi. 119.

Photo: Alinari.

INTERIOR OF SPANISH CHAPEL. SANTA MARIA NOVELLA.

and laymen, judges and citizens, scholars and ladies—portraits indeed of the brilliant and varied types of men and women that the painter saw daily about him, though it is impossible now to identify them with any certainty. But it is well to mention that the wearer of the triple tiara is believed to be Benedict XI.—successor to Boniface VIII.—to whom Dante appears to allude in one of his Epistles,[1] and that the Emperor is Henry of Luxemburg, "l'alto Arrigo,"[2] the hero of the Poet's dream, the long-desired "Titan Pacificus," who would bring peace to fair Italy, for whose beloved spirit a place is reserved in the mystic Rose of Paradise.

Below Pope and Emperor the "Hounds of the Lord," as the Friars were popularly called, from a play on the word Dominican = "Domini canes"—watch-dogs, black and white as the Dominican habit, protect the sheep of the fold from the wolfish teeth and "privy paw" of the heretics who would disturb the faith of the Church. The temptations of the Christian on his upward course are typified by enthroned figures of the vices, strong and seductive, and by maidens, who, dancing in circle, endeavour to allure the unwary into the way of danger.

[1] Epistle viii. [2] *Par.* xxx. 137.

The possibility of pardon and restoration even for those who fall into deadly sin is indicated by the presence of a Friar who receives the confessions of the penitents. St. Dominic himself is guardian of the forgiven souls, and points them to the heavenward path, through the gateway of St. Peter—"la Porta di San Pietro."[1] Finally, in the upper portion of the picture is painted the image of Incarnate God—"the Love that sways the sun and the other stars"—

"L'Amor che muove il Sole e l'altre stelle,"[2]

awaiting in glory the coming of the Redeemed.

The Mysteries of Redemption and the Mysteries of Grace have passed before us, and as far as human salvation is concerned "the rest is silence," but on the left side of the chapel there remains one fresco of the utmost importance to Dantists. The subject of this painting is the Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Saint who was the brain of the great body of Friar Preachers, as St. Dominic was the heart. He is seated on a throne, surrounded by Apostles and Prophets, who confirm his teaching, while below are allegoric figures representing those Arts and Sciences that, even though in part revealed to the Pagan world,

[1] *Inf.* i. 134. [2] *Par.* xxxiii. 145.

have, since the coming of Christ in the Flesh, become handmaids of the Lord. On the open book that St. Thomas holds is a verse taken from the lesson recited annually on his Festival, "I desired, and understanding was given me; I prayed, and the spirit of Wisdom came upon me; and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones." No more appropriate saying than this passage from the Apocrypha could be put into the mouth of one who, above all things, esteemed Him Who is the Eternal Wisdom. For, as the well-known legend tells us, he knelt with his completed work before the Divine Symbol of Suffering, and in the silence a Voice was heard saying, "Well hast thou written of Me, Thomas, what reward shall I give thee?" "None other than Thyself, O Lord," the Saint replied. Remembering how much Dante was indebted to the writings of this prince among theologians for his system of religious dogma, and that he virtually anticipated the decree of canonization that the Church passed on him in the year 1323, we cannot but feel how entirely he would have sympathized with the object of the designer of the fresco, the glorification of the great Dominican.

Not only so, but below "Thomas d'Aquino"[1]

[1] *Par.* x. 99.

there cluster other personages of the *Commedia.* Sabellius and Arius[1]—the two famous heresiarchs—spoken of by Dante as mutilators of the Sacred Scriptures, crouch at his feet, together with the Arabian scholar Averroes,[2] "who made the great commentary," their subordinate position testifying to the conquest of the Catholic faith over false doctrine. On either side of these recumbent figures are representatives of different departments of human learning, and included in this goodly fellowship we find Aristotle,[3] "il maestro di color che sanno" —"the master of those who know"—the Greek philosopher whose works are more frequently quoted by Dante than those of any other writer, ancient or modern. He stands as the exponent of Logic, and in close proximity to him is his companion in Limbo—Ptolemy[4]—the originator of the astronomic scheme on which the whole of the cosmography of Dante's poem is based. Donatus the Grammarian,[5] the preceptor of St. Jerome, is not far off—he who, as Dante says, "alla prim' arte degnò por la mano"; and near at hand is Justinian,[6] the noted codifier of existing laws, the soul that comes to meet the Poet in the Heaven of

[1] *Par.* xiii. 127. [2] *Inf.* iv. 144. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 131.
[4] *Ibid.* iv. 142. [5] *Par.* xii. 137. [6] *Ibid.* vi. 10.

Photo: Alinari.

THE TRIUMPH OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS. SANTA MARIA NOVELLA.

Mercury with those words on his lips, at once humble and imperial, "Cesare fui e son Giustiniano," "I who was Caesar am now Justinian."

The Divine Science has four interpreters, three of whom appear in the Heaven of the Sun, the glorious dwelling-place of the great theologians. Peter Lombard is the foremost, the Saint who desired

> "con la poverella
> Offerse a santa Chiesa il suo tesoro."[1]

The "Sentiarum Libri," a collection of sentences taken from the Fathers, a very popular book in mediaeval times, was the "mite" that after the example of the poor widow, he wished to present to Holy Church.

Boethius[2] comes next—

> "L'anima santa, che il mondo fallace
> Fa manifesto a chi di lei ben ode,"

the saintly spirit that, after tasting the joys of the ascetic life, declares the world's deceitfulness to all who hear him. Dante greatly loved *De Consolatione Philosophi*, the best-known work of Boethius, and, as he himself tells us, turned to it for comfort in the dreary days that followed the death of Beatrice. A passage from

[1] *Par.* x. 107. [2] *Ibid.* x. 125.

the same book was also evidently in his mind when he composed the exquisite saying of poor Francesca da Rimini—

> "Nessun maggior dolore
> Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria,"[1]

that passage so beautifully paraphrased by Tennyson in the line—

"Sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

May it not be that the lover of Beatrice, in the hour of his bitterest grief, had realized to the full the truth of the words of the old writer, and that his own experience was with him when in after years he related the terrible history of the woman he had probably known as an innocent child in the happy security of her early home at Ravenna?

Dionysius the Areopagite[2] follows, the Athenian convert of St. Paul, whom the Middle Ages identified with St. Denys of France, and credited with many writings of a mystical and symbolic nature belonging to a much later age. Dante was greatly indebted for the marvellous descriptions of the "trinal triplicities" of the Choirs of the Angelic Hierarchy in the *Paradiso*, to these curious works. Last

[1] *Inf.* v. 121. [2] *Par.* x. 115.

of all we see St. Augustine of Hippo, in this fresco the representative of Dogmatic Theology, but by the Poet placed, with St. Francis and St. Dominic, among the petals of the Celestial Rose,[1] as the Founder of a Religious Order.

The treasures of Santa Maria Novella are by no means exhausted, and a visit here will be needful when we consider the early Art of Tuscany; but for the present we must bid farewell to this beautiful building, the older sanctuary of the Dominican brethren in Florence, and visit Santa Croce, the church for so many centuries associated with the Friars following the Franciscan Rule. Facing the entrance of Santa Maria Novella on the opposite side of the Piazza is the Loggia di San Paolo, adorned with a lunette by Andrea della Robbia commemorating the meeting of St. Francis and St. Dominic, an event said to have taken place in an old hospice for pilgrims in Via dei Bardi, incorporated some years ago in the Palazzo Canigiani. This lovely bas-relief may well serve as a symbol of the Church's Knights Errant, for in the *Divina Commedia* as here, "le due campioni," the "twin champions"[2] of Christ's host, clasp hands together—brothers, not rivals, in their devotion to their Lord.

[1] *Par.* xxxii. 35. [2] *Ibid.* xii. 44.

Thus we proceed from the spiritual home of the Spanish Dominic to that of St. Francis, his Italian fellow-worker in the same fields "white unto harvest," traversing the whole length of the Cerchia Antica of Florence before we reach Santa Croce. The way lies through the Via de' Banchi and Via de' Cerretani —names that recall two important industries of the City—to the Piazza del Duomo, that great square haunted by so many memories, and surely at all times of the year one of the sunniest spots in Tuscany or indeed in Italy. Then it turns sharply to the right down Via Calzaioli, or the "Street of the Stocking-makers," which formerly bore the name of Corso degli Adimari, from the presence there in large numbers of the Palazzi of the great Guelph house, that family whom Dante hated with a burning hatred.[1] On the right is still visible one of their towers, and near at hand dwelt Boccaccio Adimari, the enemy of the Poet, who seized his goods during the early days of his exile, and did all that lay in his power to hinder his return to his birthplace. It says something for Dante's lack of personal malice that this man—albeit alive at the time the *Commedia* was written—did not find himself,

[1] *Par.* xvi. 115.

like the hapless Fra Alberigo,[1] consigned for all Eternity to one of the Bolgias of the *Inferno*. After crossing Piazza della Signoria, the centre of the civic life of "la gran villa," where so many of the more important scenes of her history were enacted, and passing through the Borgo de Greci, we come at last to the Piazza Santa Croce. In the middle of the great square is the monument erected a few years ago to Dante Alighieri, and it is here, according to Charles Leland, that the spirit of the Florentine may be seen by any poet, who will come here at night and invoke him in verse.

The first settlement of the "Frati Minori" in the neighbourhood of Florence dates from a very early period in the history of the famous Order, for when St. Francis visited the City in the year 1211, before the formal confirmation of his rule by the supreme Pontiff, he found a little band of his followers dwelling in a house outside the Porta San Gallo. For about seventy years the community appear to have been content with very humble quarters, but at the end of this time the Altafronti family bestowed on them the spot of ground where Santa Croce now stands, and migrating thither, they built a convent and a chapel dedicated

[1] *Inf.* xxxiii. 118.

to St. Anthony, and of this some part remains behind the choir of the later church. The chapel could not have been long in use, when the Friars who worshipped in it (fired, it may be, by the example of their Dominican brethren, hard at work on their new foundation on the other side of the town) determined to enlarge their bounds. They applied to Arnolfo del Cambio, then at the very zenith of his fame, for the design for the great church which should supersede their little oratory, and it was begun in the year 1294, a few months before Dante entered on his political career. Two of the Great Guilds, the Arte dei Mercanti and the Arte di Calimala, specially contributed to the expenses of the rebuilding, and Cardinal Matteo d'Acquasparta proclaimed an indulgence to whosoever would provide funds for its completion.

The modern façade of Santa Croce has no connection with Dante or his times, and so it may safely be neglected. The first impression to be derived from the interior of the building is the likeness that exists between the design of Arnolfo and that of the Friars who constructed Santa Maria Novella, both churches being in the Gothic style, while both possess a very similar ground plan,

consisting of a wide nave, short transepts, and an unimportant chancel, flanked on each side by chapels. A common feature that has unfortunately in both cases disappeared, is the screen or "tramezzo" that once crossed the nave, at the place where a step still remains, altering the level of the pavement. Dante doubtless had in mind, when writing the *Purgatorio*, a partition like this, for when he would describe the Gateway of St. Peter he uses the word "regge,"[1] a name only applied to the door whence ingress and egress were obtained through the centre of the "tramezzo." His own portrait by Giotto, long vanished, alas! is believed to have hung at one time in the centre of the middle aisle of this church, possibly on part of the screen.

Santa Croce is not unfrequently called the "Westminster Abbey" of Florence, and the chief desire of the strangers who flock here from all quarters of the globe is unquestionably to seek out the tombs and other monuments erected to the memory of the more famous men of this far-famed City. The primary object, however, of a first visit to the great Franciscan shrine should be the consideration of the history of the Founder of the Order, as depicted

[1] *Purg.* ix. 134.

alike by painter and sculptor, and the relation it bears to Dante and the *Divina Commedia*. The morning is the best time for the study of fresco and bas-relief, for although in some respects Santa Croce is most beautiful of aspect when the western sun streams into the building, the dazzling glory in which it is then enveloped is a hindrance to the distinguishing of detail.

At the outset arises a problem which has greatly perplexed Dante students in all ages, and is never now likely to be satisfactorily answered. Was the Poet in a special sense a son of Francis, a member of that Tertiary Order to which so many of the more devout among his contemporaries belonged? There is a strong tradition to this effect, and though there cannot be said to be any very direct evidence in favour of it, there are indications rendering it not unlikely. If the supposition is accepted, a very difficult passage in the *Inferno* can be comprehended—that in which Dante casts into the abyss of Hell, after seeing the punishment of carnal sinners, the cord with which he is girded,[1] a cord being a portion of the Franciscan habit, and a type of the mortification of the sinful lusts of the flesh.

[1] *Inf.* xvi. 106.

Again, in one of the four marvellous frescoes painted by Giotto over the High Altar of the Lower Church of San Francesco at Assisi, the fresco of "Holy Chastity," three figures, representatives of the three sections of the Order, advance to meet the Founder-Saint, and of these three the face of the tertiary bears some resemblance to Dante. Finally, it is said that the Poet was buried at his own request in the Franciscan habit, and we know at least that he was laid to rest in the immediate vicinity of the Franciscan Church at Ravenna. It would be a glad thought that Dante and St. Francis, pilgrims both through the highways and byways of Italy—exiles also, the one from Florence, the other from the "City of the great King"—were thus linked together. In any case the writer of the *Divina Commedia* must have been very familiar with the story of "il poverel di Dio,"[1] "Christ's little bedesman," and he had certainly read the two lives compiled by Tommaso da Celano and St. Bonaventura, the early biographers of the Saint.

The pulpit, standing by a pillar on the south side of the nave, is beautiful, one of the most beautiful in Italy, and though of much later date than Francis or Dante, furnishes the

[1] *Par.* xiii. 33.

keynote for the right understanding of the symbolism of this noble house of God. Notice, in the first place, the hand holding a cross projecting from one of the sides, for the dedication chosen by the Friars, that of "Santa Croce," was dictated neither by chance nor caprice, as to them the instrument of the Saviour's Death was an object of most peculiar veneration. The reason for this special devotion grew from their belief that the continual contemplation of the Crucifixion of Christ had impressed on the body of their Founder,[1] in an even more literal sense than that of St. Paul, "the marks of the Lord Jesus." It is, therefore, the "Holy Cross" on which they would have us first meditate, and then on the circumstances of the life of St. Francis, for the lovely bas-reliefs with which Benedetto da Maiano, a sculptor of the fifteenth century, has enriched this, his most characteristic work, are given up to scenes from the life of the Saint and of his early disciples.

The Cross and Francis, they are inseparably connected, and both were indeed dear to Dante, and have left their image throughout the pages of the great Poem. In the choir are the frescoes in which Agnolo Gaddi, an artist of the school

[1] *Par.* xi. 106.

of Giotto, has related the mediaeval history of the True Cross. On the north wall is shown the little shoot of tender green leaves that should bring salvation to mankind, itself sprung from that Tree of good and evil, "whose mortal taste brought death into the world and all our woe," planted by Seth on the grave of Adam, and greeted in humble adoration by the Queen of Sheba. It is to this part of the legend that Dante is evidently alluding, when in the wonderful allegory at the close of the *Purgatorio*,[1] he describes how the mere touch of the pole of the Chariot of Holy Church—the Wood of the Passion—brings back beauty and blossom to the bare trunk despoiled and rendered leafless by the sin of Adam. Other passages from the same story follow: the angry Jews draw from the Pool of Bethesda, into which it had been contemptuously cast, the Tree of Healing—now grown into a mighty beam—and fashion therefrom the Cross of Christ, soon to be exalted on Calvary. Three centuries later St. Helena discovers through a miracle the precious relic, of more value to the devout Queen than all earthly treasures; and finally it is seen captured by the Persians, and restored to the Christians by the Emperor Heraclius.

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 51.

The most sacred spot in the whole building is thus devoted to the celebration of the glories of the "True Cross," those glories so wonderfully painted in the fourteenth Canto of the *Paradiso*, where Dante finds it impossible to describe in human language the splendour of the vision vouchsafed to his longing eyes. Extended before him is a great Cross,[1] a Cross within a circle, equal-armed, resembling the aureole that in early Italian Art is set about the Head of the Saviour, and the token of His Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar. Up and down the transverse bar of the "venerabil segno" float the warrior spirits of the Heaven of Mars—among others his own ancestor Cacciaguida[2]—each glittering with a more vivid radiance as they catch the celestial contact, and on the glowing background is the Figure of Christ Himself.

It is but a step from the choir of Santa Croce to that Chapel of the Bardi—Beatrice's kinsmen by marriage—where Giotto wrought out his rendering of the story of the Saint, who, following in the footsteps of the Crucified, carried the Cross on his own shoulders with such courage and even gaiety, a "Divina Commedia" indeed, and one most specially

[1] *Par.* xiv. 101. [2] *Ibid.* xv. 89.

Photo : Alinari.

THE RENUNCIATION OF ST. FRANCIS. GIOTTO. SANTA CROCE.

beloved by both Dante and the painter. The first act of this most popular of miracle-plays is the espousal of Poverty by St. Francis—not the Mystical Marriage, but the literal renunciation of all his possessions by the lad of Assisi—in the presence of his own father, and of the Bishop of the Diocese.

> "Dinanzi alla spirital corte,
> Et coram patre."[1]

To this succeeds the confirmation of the Rule by Pope Honorius, who, after a marvellous dream, added a second crown, "seconda corona,"[2] to the seal already set on the labours of the Saint by Innocent III. The arrival of Francis "nella presenza del Soldan superba"[3]—he of Egypt—follows, and then his appearance "out of the body" to St. Anthony of Padua, two years before his departure from this world. Giotto makes no attempt here to show the bestowal of the Stigmata, that unimaginable scene that took place, "nel crudo sasso intra Tevere ed Arno,"[4] among the harsh rocks of La Verna; but in the last of the great frescoes, that representing the deathbed of the Saint, certain of the Friars are occupied in the verification of the sacred wounds.

[1] *Par.* xi. 61.
[2] *Ibid.* xi. 97.
[3] *Ibid.* xi. 101.
[4] *Ibid.* xi. 106.

The altar-piece of this chapel has been ascribed to Margheritone, and is said to be an authentic portrait of Francis, while around the image of the Founder of the Order are grouped four of the more notable Franciscans, St. Louis the King,[1] to whom Dante alludes in rather slighting terms, possibly in a spirit of human irritation, remembering that he owed his canonization to Boniface VIII., St. Louis of Toulouse, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and St. Clare, that Lady whose habit and veil were borne by the gentle Piccarda.[2] On the vaulted roof may be seen St. Francis in glory, and his three "commanding angels," as Ruskin calls them, Poverty, Chastity, and Holy Obedience, a simpler version of the earlier and better-known frescoes at Assisi.

Later on it will be needful to return to Santa Croce and look at the monument bearing the name of Dante, but for the moment such a pilgrimage is completed by a visit to the second Dominican foundation of Florence, San Marco. The interior of the convent may be regarded as a great Gospel Book, illustrated by Fra Angelico, and on nearly every page is pictured St. Dominic; not indeed in the external circumstances of his life that lack the

[1] *Purg.* xx. 50. [2] *Par.* iii. 98.

picturesqueness distinguishing the career of St. Francis, but as "famigliar di Cristo,"[1] the familiar friend of Christ. In this character he is present at all the scenes of the Passion as an interested spectator, sometimes turning away his head in sorrow when he dares look no longer, but always overflowing with love and sympathy for the Saviour, who had redeemed mankind at such tremendous cost. Finally, in the great fresco of the Chapter-house, he and Francis kneel together at the Feet of the Crucified, as is indeed most fitting, for—

"Degno e che dov' e l'un l'altro s' induca,"

"where the one is, the other worthily should also be."[2]

[1] *Par.* xii. 73. [2] *Ibid.* xii. 34.

CHAPTER VI

DANTE AND THE ART OF HIS TIME

"Dante once prepared to paint an angel."
R. BROWNING.

"Vostr' arte|a Dio quasi e nipote."
DANTE.

THE early years of the century in which Dante saw the light were, as far as Art is concerned, a period of utter decadence, alike in Tuscany and throughout the Italian peninsula. The Byzantine school had in earlier days produced works of great beauty and dignity, domed churches, delicate carvings, grand mosaics, but it had now stiffened into utter immobility. Artists still there were, but mere copyists, hopelessly fettered by ecclesiastical tradition, which left no scope whatever for any sort of originality. Their figures were badly drawn, and habited in strange hieratic garments—mere images, passive, unemotional, lifeless.

The Divine Infant was represented with the

proportions of a miniature man held in the arms of a Mother who, while gazing at the spectator out of sad almond-shaped eyes, seemed incapable not only of maternal feeling, but even of womanly solicitude for her sacred charge. The Christ of Calvary was shown more commonly dead, a shapeless twisted figure, crushed out of all but the barest semblance to humanity, hideous, distorted, repulsive.

The range of subject possible to painter or sculptor was very small; in fact, it was almost limited to the two mentioned—the Madonna and Child, and the Crucifix. The medieval Church rightly desired above all things to impress on mankind the two great facts of redemption, the Incarnation and the Passion, "Incarnatus est," "Passus est," and her interpreters in the realm of Art were too unskilled to escape the boundaries of a narrow convention, and depict scenes demanding freshness of treatment. A certain number of paintings which belonged to this age may be seen in the Accademia delle Belle Arti, the galleries of the Uffizi, and in some of the churches of Florence, and should be carefully studied by all who would realize the importance of that artistic revival which Dante saw with living eyes.

The first awakening from the sleep of immobility came, as far as Tuscany is concerned, not in Dante's beloved Florence, but in the neighbouring republics of Pisa and Siena. In the former city, Nicola Pisano—he who, as John Addington Symonds says, "first breathed with breath of genius life into the dead forms of plastic art"—produced, even in the years before the birth of the Poet, statues and bas-reliefs of great beauty, owing their inspiration to the sculptures of antiquity. In the latter town a school of artists who had become impatient of the fetters by which their predecessors were bound, paved the way for Duccio di Buonsegna, who broke away altogether from the traditions inherited from Constantinople.

It seems strange that Dante makes no reference in his Poems to these famous pioneers of the Renaissance, for he must have been familiar with the masterpieces of both. After his exile he certainly visited the two cities, and doubtless beheld in the Pisan Baptistery the far-famed pulpit of Nicola Pisano, while over the High Altar of Siena hung in his day the splendid "Majestas" of Duccio di Buonsegna. The truth is, the writer of the *Divina Commedia* was pre-eminently a Florentine, and regarded Florence as the

centre of the universe, and therefore when he would give an example of the uncertainty of earthly renown, it is to the home of his early manhood that he returns in spirit, and relates how the fame of his friend Giotto had overshadowed that of Cimabue.

> "Credette Cimabue nella pintura
> Tener lo campo, ed ora ha Giotto il grido,
> Si che la fama di colui oscura." [1]

"Cimabue thought to hold the field in painting, and now Giotto hath the cry, so that the fame of the other is obscured."

But little is known of the life of Cimabue, and what details have come down to us are chiefly due to Vasari, at no time an altogether dependable historian. According to this worthy he was descended from a noble house, and was born in Florence in the year 1240. His parents destined him for the priesthood, and with this end in view sent him to study theology under the Master of the Novices at Santa Maria Novella, not (it need hardly be said) the present monastery, but the older convent which stood on the same site, and was commonly called "Santa Maria tra le Vigne." The Dominican friars, at the time that Cimabue lodged among them, were in the act

[1] *Purg.* xi. 94.

of having their walls decorated by Greek artists, and the lad was speedily attracted by the work of these men, and spent all his leisure in their society, neglecting his books. His true vocation was happily recognized before any irrecoverable step had been taken in the direction of Holy Orders, and he was set free to devote his energies to the pursuit of Art.

After a term of apprenticeship to the Greeks, he laboured earnestly and successfully for many years in different parts of Italy, accomplishing paintings much in advance of those of his forerunners, but fate has dealt hardly with all that he left behind him, and very little remains to testify to the ability which impressed itself so deeply on his contemporaries. His frescoes both at Pisa and Florence have disappeared, it is not certain that those in the Upper Church at Assisi assigned to him are really by his hand, while the authenticity of the Madonna in the Accademia delle Belle Arti, once in the Church of Santa Trinità, has also been questioned. The artist has special reason to deplore the loss of a famous portrait of the Contessa Matelda, the "war-like Deborah of the Papacy," whom he represented on horseback in martial array.

For several centuries his reputation rested

Photo: Alinari.

THE RUCELLAI MADONNA, CIMABUE. SANTA MARIA NOVELLA.

on the so-called "Rucellai" Madonna, that fine picture which hangs in the chapel belonging to the Rucellai family in the right-hand transept of Santa Maria Novella. It was fitting that the name of Cimabue should be associated with that very building within whose walls are vestiges of the earlier church where he first became aware of the bent of his own genius, and where there remain possibly traces of the work of his Greek masters. With thoughts like these in mind, generation after generation of the lovers of Art have lingered reverently in the Rucellai Chapel, gazing at the enthroned figures of Madonna and Child, surrounded by six attendant angels, a stately vision, all dim gold and colours, archaic it is true, yet not unbeautiful. They related to each other the well-known story of how the great painting before them was, during the later years of Cimabue's life, carried thither by a triumphant people from his studio in the neighbourhood of Santa Croce, and how the street through which the long procession passed bore ever after the title of Borgo Allegro, in memory of a day of joy—

> "Named the Glad Borgo from that beauteous face
> Which thrilled the artist."[1]

[1] E. B. Browning.

Alas for romance, modern critics are inclined to attribute the Rucellai Madonna to Duccio di Buonsegna, or some other painter of the Sienese school. Let us be thankful that Mr. Roger Fry, no mean authority on matters artistic, upholds the earlier ascription, and thus permits us to accept it for ourselves, without any of those questionings which are impertinent where a delightful legend is concerned.

Towards the close of Cimabue's career we appear to emerge once more from the twilight of uncertainty into the light of day, for there is every reason to believe that the last work he undertook was the mosaic of the Christ in blessing in the Duomo of Pisa, a work which he never finished, for he died in Florence in the year 1302, and was laid to rest in the precincts of Santa Maria del Fiore. The title of the "Father of modern painting" has been bestowed on him, but, as Dante's lines seem to imply, it belongs more rightly to his wonderful pupil Giotto.

Giotto Bondone, unlike his master, belonged to the peasant class, and although a native of the Commune of Florence, was not in the strict sense of the word a Florentine, as his parents lived at Vespignano, a village about fourteen miles to the north of Dante's birthplace, where

he was born in 1276. Two conflicting stories are told of his introduction to Cimabue, the one that the older painter found him in the neighbourhood of his home, making a rude sketch of the sheep he was tending, the other that he was apprenticed to a wool-stapler in Florence, and sought out for himself the studio in the future Borgo Allegro. In either case the result was the same, Cimabue realized the budding genius of the boy, and undertook his training as an artist; but Giotto was of too great and independent an intellect to owe very much to his teacher, and coming under Sienese influences at an early age, he speedily forsook the Byzantine formula, and turned from convention to nature.

At what period of his life he and Dante became acquainted is uncertain, but doubtless the latter knew Cimabue, and it was probably in his "bottéga," or workshop, that he first met the youth who was to perform for painting the same miracle that he himself would accomplish for the sister art of poetry. Certain stories, very possibly authentic, have come down which seem to show that a close intimacy existed between them, and that the rather caustic wit of the scholar, and the genial humour of the craftsman were freely exercised at the

expense of one another, without offence to either. Except for a visit Giotto paid to Rome at the command of Boniface VIII., he appears to have remained in Florence until Dante quitted the city for ever, so the friends, so unlike each other in everything but their devotion to the ideal, and their affection for St. Francis, must have had many opportunities of sweet converse.

After the bolt had fallen, and the Poet was a banished man, he and the Painter met in the year 1306 at Padua. Giotto was engaged in the adornment of the Madonna del' Arena, the chapel which Enrico da Scrovegni built in expiation of the sins of his father, that noted usurer who in the *Inferno* is distinguished from his fellow-criminals in the Circle of the Extortionate, by the wearing of a pouch emblazoned with the arms of his family—argent a fat sow (scrofa), azure.[1] There is a tradition that Dante aided his friend in the choice of subjects for the frescoes covering the walls of the chapel, and it is curious to note that the scenes include the Expulsion of the Money-changers from the Temple, and the hiring of Judas, while the figure of Charity tramples on bags filled with coin—incidents such as might

[1] *Inf.* xvii. 64.

easily have been suggested by the Author of the *Divina Commedia.*

After the completion of the Paduan Chapel Giotto passed on to Assisi, there to assist in the decoration of the splendid church recently built in honour of St. Francis. The memory of "il poverel di Dio," "the most saintly of Italians, and the most Italian of Saints," had from the very first been ardently cherished by all classes of his fellow-countrymen. They saw before their eyes the spare figure and worn habit of the "poor little man of God," he who had for so many years gone in and out among them, kindling in the hearts of those to whom he ministered that passionate devotion to the Person of Christ which was the open secret of his own spiritual life.

Hardly had he left this earth when his followers desired some memorial of him, some portrait, however rude, that would give back to them the features of their beloved Father. The artists of the day did their best to satisfy this craving, and not a few of these attempts at portraiture—singularly unpleasing, for the most part, it must be owned—have survived, notably one in the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence, and another, probably the work of Margheritone, over the altar of the Bardi

Chapel at Santa Croce. As early as the year 1236, Giunta, a native of Pisa, drew on the walls of San Francesco at Assisi, in very archaic fashion, a series of scenes taken from the life of Francis, and later on Cimabue and other painters laboured there; but the glory of representing in any adequate sense the life-story of the Saint belongs of right to the peasant of Vespignano, Giotto Bondone. As the powers of this great artist matured he developed a taste for symbolism that brings him into very close relationship with Dante, so much so that certain of his paintings might also be regarded as the pictorial equivalent of the writings of his friend. This is especially the case with the frescoes that he painted over the High Altar of the Lower Church at Assisi, and indeed one of them, that of Holy Poverty, has been thought to owe its inspiration to the famous Mystical Marriage[1] of the *Paradiso*. That this is an impossible supposition has been shown by documents proving that the fresco was in existence before the *Paradiso* was written, and there can be no doubt that Painter and Poet alike borrowed the idea that they carried out with such singular beauty and grace from early Franciscan literature, especially from a Latin

[1] *Par.* xi. 64.

poem entitled "Sacrum Commercium beati Francisci cum domina Paupertate," ascribed to John of Parma. Whether Dante visited Assisi while Giotto was at work cannot be ascertained, but they probably met at intervals until the close of the Poet's life, for Giotto travelled much, undertaking commissions in various parts of Italy, and it is more than probable that he would have gone out of his way to visit his friend. According to a not unlikely tradition, they did so come together a few months before the Poet's death, the painter being occupied with the execution of certain frescoes in the Church of San Giovanni Evangelista at Ravenna, by order, so it is said, of Guido da Polenta, Dante's host.

Fate has been kinder to the pupil than to the master, and much still remains in Florence which will enable the visitor to realize for himself the marvellous manner in which Giotto outstripped, not only Cimabue, but also every other artist who preceded him. It is in his mural paintings that the extent of his genius may be most clearly seen, and in addition to those scenes from the life of St. Francis in the Capella Bardi at Santa Croce, already described, frescoes by him are preserved both in the Capella Perruzzi in the same building and in

the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella, not to mention the famous but doubtfully authentic portrait of Dante in the Bargello. Although much injured by time and restoration, the composition and colouring of these works are supremely beautiful, and their appearance during the first half of the fourteenth century constitute a veritable epoch in the history of Florentine Art. Even Domenico Ghirlandaio, nearly a century later, to take one example only, was indebted to the earlier master for his design for the fine fresco of the Death of St. Francis, that he painted on the walls of the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinità.

It is not without meaning that Giotto was the first to take religious themes out of the region of the unknown and translate them into the simplicities of ordinary life. To him, as to his artistic descendants, the Drama of Redemption was enacted in Italy, not in some far-away ecclesiastical country. And the men and women who are witnesses of all that he depicts are clothed in the attire of Italian citizens, and stand among Italian buildings, with an Italian landscape behind them, the low hills and olive trees of Tuscany replacing the gold backgrounds of a more primitive age. In this matter also a certain affinity is felt between

Photo: Alinari.

DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS, GIOTTO. SANTA CROCE.

Poet and Painter, for there are many Italians among the inhabitants of the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso*, and the affairs of even the lesser Italian cities are accorded a position of extraordinary importance in all three Canticas of the *Divina Commedia*.

Examples of the altar-pieces of Giotto are to be found in the Accademia, the Uffizzi, San Marco, and Santa Croce, and these, though distinguished by a lesser measure of originality of treatment than his more ambitious attempts, deserve very close attention. Above and beyond all else, the lovely Campanile he designed still keeps his memory green in Dante's own city, and no lover of the great writer who has ever beheld it towering up against the divinely blue sky of Italy will forget the famous passage of the *Purgatorio*, or cease to assert that even after the lapse of so many centuries "ora ha Giotto il grido."

To Dante, born in a fortunate hour, was granted the privilege of beholding the dawn of the Renaissance in Florence, as the friend and comrade of the man, to whom, more than to any other individual, the greatest revival of modern times is due. If he had not been possessor of a temperament disposing him to sympathize with the spirit of his age, these

facts might have affected him but little; as it is, they exerted a profound influence over the character of his works. The *Vita Nuova* and the *Divina Commedia* are both in their different degrees the productions of an artist, of one who was blessed with rare powers of visualizing, who saw clearly with the eye of his imagination what he was about to set down with unerring hand. The lovely visionary scenes of the earlier book suggest at once the touch of the painter—miniatures they are, executed upon vellum, belonging to the "Confessio Amantis" of the Middle Ages. Even so is it also with certain episodes that can never be forgotten in the more famous Poem—fresco-paintings these, on which Eternity has set its seal: Paolo and Francesca,[1]

> "Going for ever on the accursed air,
> There in the dawnless twilight,"[2]

the arrival of the boat, wafted by the "Bird of God" to the shores of the cleansing mount;[3] the vision of Blessed Mary greeted by the Archangel Gabriel, amidst the acclamations of the Host of Heaven.[4]

The contemporaries of Dante were so struck by the marvellous realism displayed in the

[1] *Inf.* v. 74. [2] Mallock. [3] *Purg.* ii. 23.
[4] *Par.* xxxii. 95.

Inferno that the unlearned among them believed him to have had, either in his own person or that of another, a special revelation of the nether world. The women of Verona, watching from their doorways the spare form of Can Grande's guest passing through the streets of the City, said in awestruck whispers that the man before them was in the habit of visiting Hell, and that in consequence of these strange journeyings beard and skin bore traces of fire and smoke. It was also reported that the spirit of a knight slain in the battle of Campaldino had been permitted to return to the regions of the upper air for the express purpose of relating his experiences to the Poet, his guide through the Kingdom of the Dead having been none other than the Emperor Charlemagne.[1]

Nor are there lacking traces of Dante's interest in painting and sculpture. The bas-reliefs of the Circle of the Proud in Purgatory[2] are described with the utmost vividness—the conception and execution of the subjects, taken alternately from sacred and profane history, and inculcating humility, being ascribed to One Supreme Artist, the Designer of the Universe, Almighty God Himself.[3] The pavement of the same Circle—"Lo letto delle piante tue"[4]—is

[1] *Par.* xviii. 43. [2] *Purg.* x. [3] *Ibid.* x. 99. [4] *Ibid.* xii. 15.

also a marvel of careful delineation—"Dead the dead, the living seemed alive,"[1]

"Morti li morti, e i vivi parean vivi,"

the author, in this instance, appearing—strangely enough—to anticipate the glories of those "Grafitti," or pictures in stone mosaic, with which a century later the churches of Italy were adorned. He also refers to

"quell' arte
Che 'alluminare' e chiamato in Parisi,"[2]

that branch of the fine arts which belonged to the illuminator, whose business it was to enrich the "black letter" of the more precious manuscripts with gloriously coloured capitals, and border the pages of Missal and Breviary with quaint designs—birds, beasts, and flowers curiously intertwined. Two of these scribes Dante specially mentions—Oderisi of Gubbio[3] and Franco of Bologna,[4] both of whom were in Rome at the time of the first Papal Jubilee, engaged in the carrying out of commissions for Pope Boniface VIII. They are believed to have been master and pupil, and in the *Divina Commedia* stand in a parallel position to Cimabue and Giotto, the Bolognese having wholly outstripped his Umbrian teacher, and snatched

[1] *Purg.* xii. 67. [2] *Ibid.* xi. 80. [3] *Ibid.* xi. 79.
[4] *Ibid.* xi. 83.

Photo: Alinari.

THE CAMPANILE. "ORA HA GIOTTO IL GRIDO."

from him his fame. That Dante was fully conversant with the science of heraldry is certain from many passages in his works, and heraldry was regarded at that time as an offshoot of the painter's craft, Giotto sometimes condescending with his own hands to emblazon the armorial bearings of his patrons.

Another and more subtle indication of the artistic feeling that was part of the "goodly heritage" of the Poet, lies in the evidences abounding in *Divina Commedia* of his delicate sense of colour. The Inferno is represented as practically colourless—grey shores, black water, livid stone, the natural result, in all probability, of a scarcity of light, except where it is rendered lurid by the presence of flames or blood. The ministers of Heaven's vengeance are generally black, like that one of the "neri cherubini" who dragged Guido da Montefeltro[1] to his doom. The colour green, typical of hope, is only used twice in the *Inferno*—once of the "verde smalto,"[2] the grass of Limbo; the second time of the hydra hair of the Furies, which is "verdissime,"[3] the greenest green, a metallic and poisonous green, like verdigris, the colour of decay. Lightning is "vermilion," so are the eyes of Cerberus and one of the

[1] *Inf.* xxvii. 113. [2] *Ibid.* iv. 118. [3] *Ibid.* ix. 40.

heads of Lucifer, and many of the details of the "Bolgias" are red, "rosso;" while "persa,"[1] a tint Dante himself describes as compounded of black and purple, the black predominating, is used of the waters of the Styx. When we descend into the depths we find that the Circle of the Traitors[2] is white and pallid from the excessive cold, the winter of the soul always reigning in the centre of the land of "Eternal Exile,"[3] shadowed by the wings of the great enemy of mankind.

Leaving the gloom of Hell behind, we emerge into a world of pure brightness. The sky overhanging the sacred mount is of the "dolce color d'oriental zaffiro,"[4] a deep and lovely blue. The distinguishing feature of Purgatory is the presence of hope, and the symbolic green of early spring is therefore to be seen in the vestments and wings of the angels guarding the elect,[5] in the herbage of the Valley of Princes,[6] and the leaves of that tree by which the sin of gluttony is done away.[7] With this exception, white, the "colourless colour," is everywhere present, carrying out the idea of the blossoming of the human

[1] *Inf.* vii. 103. [2] *Ibid.* xxxiv. 29. [3] *Ibid.* xxiii. 126.
[4] *Purg.* i. 13. [5] *Ibid.* viii. 28. [6] *Ibid.* vii. 75.
[7] *Ibid.* xxiii. 1.

soul under that process of purification which fits it to approach the abode of the "All Holy." The stone in the Cornice where the Envious are chastened is indeed of a livid hue,[1] and in the Cornice of the Angry all colour is lost in darkness;[2] but everywhere else in Purgatory there is a harmony of green and white. This is accentuated in the Earthly Paradise, where the figures in the procession of the Triumph of the Church walk—vested in white—through a wood, under the shade of green boughs, over grass mingled with flowers.[3] The Blessed Beatrice has a green mantle over the robe of flame colour,[4] that recalls to mind the dress of "a subdued and noble crimson," in which she first gladdened the heart of Dante on a certain May morning in Florence so many years before, and her hair is wreathed with olive. Her eyes, those wonderful eyes, where all Heaven is to be reflected, are of the colour of an emerald.[5]

Light, symbolizing Love, is the characteristic of Heaven, and as Dante ascends thither with Beatrice, the sun glows brighter, unbearable as molten iron, until he believes there must be two suns.[6] In the *Paradiso* there are almost

[1] *Purg.* xiii. 9. [2] *Ibid.* xvi. 1. [3] *Ibid.* xxix. 88.
[4] *Ibid.* xxx. 31. [5] *Ibid.* xxxi. 116. [6] *Par.* i. 63.

as many flames as in the *Inferno*, only here they represent glory and devotion, there shame and punishment. The eagle, made up of the souls of warriors and crusaders, burns like fire;[1] the faces of the angels who hover round the Mystic Rose are of flame;[2] the Spirits of the Redeemed are little sparks, the animating love irradiating their outward semblance. Dante loves jewels almost as much as does the Beloved Apostle, but with him it is the inhabitants of the celestial country who are the treasures of God, the rose-red rubies[3] and glowing topazes[4] that adorn the City of Peace. In the glory issuing from the Throne of the Most High every fragment of colour stands out brilliantly, except in the moon, "l'eterna Margherita,"[5] the immortal Pearl, where all tints are iridescent, pale and subdued. At the close of the Apocalypse of the Poet, the Beatific Vision, there is colour—triple colour,[6] colour unspeakable, and in those circles of diverse hues is the revelation of the Triune Deity, the Creator of Heaven and earth, whose covenant with man is symbolized by the Iris, the "Bow set in the cloud."

The question whether Dante had a more

[1] *Par.* xviii. 107. [2] *Ibid.* xxxi. 13. [3] *Ibid.* xix. 4.
[4] *Ibid.* xv. 85. [5] *Ibid.* ii. 34. [6] *Ibid.* xxxiii. 117.

than theoretic knowledge of the Art of his age is one of no small importance. Leonardo Bruni answers it affirmatively, and assures us that he "drew with excellence," and the *Vita Nouva*[1] relates one poignant moment when the Poet certainly deserted the pen for the pencil. On the dawn of the first anniversary of the day when Beatrice was numbered among the citizens of Heaven, he was discovered by some persons to whom he owed courteous welcome, in the act of drawing an angel on his tablet, a devotion to his Lady, and under her direct inspiration, for in answer to the importunity of those who would have speech with him, he replied, "Altri era testè meco"[2] —"Another was with me." But in spite of this incident and the testimony of Leonardo, it is very unlikely that he could have found time, amid the pressure of literary work and political engagements, to attain to any great degree of technical dexterity, and not so much as the merest "abozzo," or sketch, from his hand remains. Still, it is a curious circumstance that not a few of the Florentine painters, including Tafi, the designer of the colossal Christ of the Baptistery, belonged to Dante's own guild, the Arte dei Medici e Speziali, and that the

[1] *V. N.* xxxv. [2] *Ibid.* xxxv.

materials needful for their work could only be procured in the spezierie or drug-shops of Florence.

As might have been expected from the pictorial character of his verse, the writings of the Poet exerted a profound influence over the Artists who came after him. For two centuries at least no Italian, whether miniaturist or wall-decorator, ever took upon himself to depict certain dread scenes of the Hereafter without being more or less indebted to the *Divina Commedia*. Who that has stood in the lovely Campo Santo at Pisa, and gazed in awe and wonder at the tremendous frescoes attributed in former days to Orcagna, but is conscious of this fact? Even the far less forcible rendering of the same subjects by Fra Angelico in the Florentine Accademia bears plainly enough the mark of the same source of inspiration; while Michael Angelo, in a later age, borrowed many details of his terrible "Last Judgment," in the Sistine Chapel at Rome, from the *Inferno* of his brother Florentine.

CHAPTER VII

FLORENCE REPENTANT

"The glory dies not, and the grief is past."

BRIDGES.

"E un grand pacier la morte."

MANZONI.

DANTE left his native town for ever before the close of February in the year 1303, and from that time he led the life of a banished man, wandering from one place to another, the sport of circumstance, the guest of many hosts. For some months after the pronouncement of the first sentence against him, his mind was entirely occupied by schemes for the return of the Bianchi to Florence, and his own subsequent restoration to home and happiness. With these ends in view he consorted with the "fuorusciti," the outlaws, both Guelph and Ghibelline, in various friendly cities, taking council with them, and planning how by united action they might overthrow the rule of the Neri. Little

by little the hopes he cherished ended in disappointment; his fellow-exiles wasted their strength in dissension; treachery thinned their ranks; whenever they had recourse to arms, defeat was their portion. Finally, in the July of 1304, a desperate attempt on the part of the Bianchi utterly failed, and Dante quitted Tuscany in a state bordering on despair.

His movements for a space of five years after this disaster are shrouded in obscurity, but traces of his presence remain in Verona, Bologna, Padua, and other parts of Northern Italy. In the Lunigiana he received much kindness from the Malespina, that "gente onrata"[1] whose liberality and courage, "il pregio della borsa e della spada," he celebrates in the *Commedia*. Not only did he repay the hospitality extended to him in the hour of need by acting on their behalf as ambassador to an ancient foe of the house, the Bishop of Luini, but in later days he dedicated the *Purgatorio* to the then head of the family, Morello Malespina.

At the conclusion of this period the Poet almost certainly betook himself to Paris, studying theology, it may be, under the guidance of

[1] *Purg.* viii. 128.

Sigieri,[1] a noted Doctor of the school of St. Thomas Aquinas, in the Vico degli Strami, the Street of Straw, the present Rue de Fouarre, that street of the scholars that stood in close proximity to the famous University of the City. From Paris, according to a tradition recorded by Giovanni Bertoldi, Bishop and Prince of Fermo, in his preface to a Latin translation of the *Divina Commedia*, finished about the year 1416, he crossed the Channel, and continued his studies in Oxford in the Kingdom of England, "in Oxonis in regno Anglie." If this statement were only true (and there are passages in the *Commedia* that seem to render it not unlikely), what a wonderful vista opens out before the eyes of the English Dantist! Once in this country, the writer of the *Inferno* would surely have turned his steps to London, the historic town, placed "sul Tamigi"[2] on the banks of Thames, and have visited our great Abbey, then, as now, the sign and symbol of national unity, where the heart of Guy de Montfort's murdered victim lay at rest.

In 1310 an event of good omen, the election of Henry of Luxemburg as Emperor of Germany, drew the Poet back to his own country. The new Emperor, a crowned dreamer of dreams,

[1] *Par.* x. 136. [2] *Inf.* xii. 120.

descended into Italy, possessed with the idea that with him it rested to bring about the pacification of that fair land whose welfare he had so deeply at heart. Dante, ever on the watch for a possible regenerator—one who would endeavour to carry into practice the theory he had himself embodied in the "De Monarchia," the dual rule of the Supreme Pontiff and the descendant of the Caesars—hailed his advent with joy, and followed his progress with palpitating interest. He saw in Henry the characteristics of the famous "Veltro,"[1] that strange mystic beast, on whom, as has been said, "every commentator has vainly tried to slip a collar," and called on all Italians throughout the peninsula to give in their allegiance to him. A certain measure of success gladdened the heart of the Poet in the first few months of Henry's campaign, but the mission of the Emperor was foredoomed to failure; very powerful were the forces arrayed against him, and though courageous and single minded, he was neither a great general nor a great statesman. For more than three years he played a losing game, and then, on August 24, 1313, disillusioned and disheartened, defied by Florence and other Guelph cities, and abandoned by the

[1] *Inf.* i. 101.

Pope, he died of fever at Buonconvento, near Siena, and at the moment of his premature departure from this world the ship of Dante's fortune foundered with all hands on board.

It is quite impossible to relate in ordered sequence the events of the Poet's life in those years that followed the extinction of his hopes. His own restless temperament or the necessities of his exile compelled him frequently to shift his quarters, and if popular tradition is to be believed, he found his way into an infinity of towns and castles in every part of Italy, except the extreme south. For some months after the death of the Emperor, he appears to have been at Lucca, the city of Santa Zita[1] and the Volto Santo,[2] as the guest of Ugguccione della Faggiuola, the well-known Ghibelline captain, to whom the *Inferno* was dedicated. Whilst there he became attached to a lady named Gentucca,[3] a member of the Rossimpelo family, afterwards the wife of a certain Bernardo Morla, on account, so an ancient commentator tells us, "of her great virtue and modesty." The young girl doubtless admired the genius of the banished man, and sympathized with his sorrows, and her gentle compassion must have been very precious

[1] *Inf.* xxi. 38. [2] *Ibid.* xxi. 48.
[3] *Purg.* xxiv. 37.

to him in those days when the remembrance of the crushing calamity that had befallen him lay heavy on his soul. In 1316 Ugguccione was driven out of Lucca by the machinations of the Guelphs, and if Dante had not already sought an asylum elsewhere, he was probably obliged to do so without delay.

Later on we find him at Verona, living at the Court of Can Grande della Scala, perhaps the most notable of the Italian magnates of the early fourteenth century. "A true son of Mars, bold and prompt in battle, and victorious exceedingly," he was famous, not only for his wide dominions, largely won by force of arms, but for the generous hospitality he extended to the political refugees of his time. His palace was a veritable haven of refuge for the "Fuorusciti," and it is said that, "desiring to appeal to the imagination of these unhappy people," he "caused to be represented on the walls of the apartments assigned to them symbols analogous to their destiny—Muses for the Poets; Mercury for the Artists; Paradise for the Preachers; for all the figure of Fortune the Inconstant."

Dante had known his courteous host for many years, for almost immediately after his

expulsion from Florence he had been entertained at Verona by Bartolomeo della Scala, Can Grande's father, the "gran Lombardo"[1] of the *Paradiso*, and had foretold the future glory of the young prince, then in the tenth year of his age.[2] In addition to this link with the past, the popular ruler and the poor scholar were bound together by a common interest and common memories, for Can Grande had been Imperial Vicar to Henry of Luxemburg; he had been present at the coronation of the Emperor at Milan, and had stood by his deathbed, taking upon himself—so it is believed—the task that "l'alto Arrigo"[3] was compelled to lay down. For a considerable space of time Dante remained at Verona, and then he seems to have left the city somewhat abruptly, and recommenced his wanderings.

There is ample evidence to show that, notwithstanding the kindness bestowed on him by many friends and patrons, these years of chance and change were years of extreme bitterness to the Poet. His proud spirit was deeply wounded by the treatment meted out to him by his beloved Florence; he had much to endure at the hands of the vain and ignorant;

[1] *Par.* xvii. 71. [2] *Ibid.* xvii. 76.
[3] *Ibid.* xxx. 137.

poverty dogged his footsteps; he must always have been overshadowed by a sense of unmerited disgrace. We are told—and the story is peculiarly significant—that on one occasion he was discovered knocking at the gate of the Benedictine Monastery of Santa Croce, near Spezia, an unknown and silent man, and on being asked by the Prior, a brother of Ugguccione della Faggiuola, what he sought, he murmured the one word, "Peace." At length, when his time on earth was drawing to a close, he found "l'ultimo refugio," his latest temporal refuge, at Ravenna, under the care of Guido Novella da Polenta, nephew of the unhappy Francesca da Rimini,[1] the heroine of that marvellous episode that stands at the opening of the *Inferno*, "like a lily in the mouth of Tartarus."[2] Here, as the concluding lines of the *Paradiso* would bid us believe, he was able to realize in his own person the truth of that saying which has comforted so many sufferers in every age, "Umbra Dei est Lux," and here, like the blessed Beatrice, he "attained to look on the beginning of peace."[3]

The last act of the long conflict of the Poet's life inspires a feeling of relief.

[1] *Inf.* v. 116. [2] Leigh Hunt. [3] *V. N.* xxiii.

"He hates him,
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer."[1]

The quiet of the little town of Ravenna, ancient even then, though less desolate than now, must have comforted him after the noisy stir of Can Grande's court. His new host, Guido da Polenta, was a man of culture, a student rather than a warrior, the possessor of a temperament that fitted him to value to the uttermost the mind and heart of his majestic guest. Dante had leisure to think and dream and write; he took up with renewed energy the task of earlier years, and carried it to triumphant perfection, completing, before the hand of the Enfranchiser touched him, the *Divina Commedia*—the marvel that was to shine a starry constellation on the centuries to come.

Who can say how much he owed to his surroundings? what inspiration he may have drawn from the splendid mosaics of the churches—the serried lines of Saints that in Sant' Apollinare Nuovo advance to do homage to Christ and His Holy Mother, the circle of Apostles adorning the cupola of San Giovanni in Fonte? Might not the very Vision of the Heaven of Heavens have been the poorer if

[1] Shakespeare.

he had never beheld these jewels of Byzantine art, or watched the Emperor Justinian,[1] a radiant figure vested in royal purple, carry offerings across the choir of San Vitale? However this may be, we know at least from his own words, that he chose "la pineta in sul lito di Chiassi,"[2] the pine wood some miles beyond the walls of the city, for the setting of his Earthly Paradise, and that it was there, in "la divina foresta spessa e viva,"[3] that Matelda gathered flowers, and Beatrice appeared wreathed with olive and seated on the Car of the Church.

For about four years Dante dwelt at Ravenna, making his home in a house belonging to Guido da Polenta, hard by the Church of San Francesco. The cruel loneliness that had been one of the worst features of his exile was now removed, for three of his children, his sons Piero and Jacopo and his daughter Beatrice, were with him, and he was happy in the society of a little company of intellectual and sympathetic friends. In the summer of 1321 Count Guido sent him to Venice, as his representative, to treat with the Republic on some questions of state. This

[1] *Par.* vi. 10. [2] *Purg.* xxviii. 20. [3] *Ibid.* xxviii. 2.

Photo: Alinari.

INTERIOR OF DANTE'S TOMB. RAVENNA.

mission cost him his life, for the Venetians, after refusing to give him audience, declined to allow him to return by sea, though he was already ill with fever, and he was obliged to undertake the fatiguing and unhealthy journey overland. He reached Ravenna in a state of mortal sickness, and at once began to prepare himself for his approaching end, "receiving every sacrament of the Church humbly and devoutly." On the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, in the year that the century came of age, he entered into rest, passing into that unseen world whose pathways he had already trodden even before he was released from the burden of the flesh.

Guido da Polenta and the citizens of Ravenna buried the body of Dante with much pomp and ceremony. They bore him, clothed in the Franciscan habit, but crowned with poetic laurels, into the adjacent convent of St. Francis, and laid him there, under the shadow of the gentle Saint of Assisi. When all due rites were performed, they returned to the house, and Guido spoke to the assembly of the genius of the dead Poet, and his own intention that a tomb should be built in the near future resplendent and worthy of so great a guest.

Meanwhile no sign of grief or remorse was shown by Florence; the City as a whole, whatever may have been the feelings of individual Florentines, remaining wholly unmoved by the tidings of the death of her greatest son. For a space of more than fifty years she offered no reparation to his memory, although, owing to the publication of the *Divina Commedia*, his fame had spread abroad throughout the length and breadth of Italy, and both Giovanni Villani and Boccaccio were eloquent in his defence. The former, in his "Chroniche Florentine," spoke of the "lofty virtues and worth of so great a citizen," and deeply regretted the fact of his banishment, declaring that such a penalty was wholly undeserved.

Boccaccio, who was but eight years of age at the time of Dante's death, seems to have grown up with an instinctive love and reverence for him, calling him his "father," copying out with his own hand the whole of the *Divina Commedia*, and urging Petrarch to study his writings. By a happy chance, in the year 1350 the Author of the *Decamerone* was brought into touch with Beatrice Alighieri, and doubtless heard from her lips many details of the utmost interest to himself, concerning

the last days of the Poet's life. At that time he was one of the Captains of the "Laudesi," the confraternity that had been founded for the purpose of singing the praises of the miraculous Madonna of Or San Michele. The archives of the Laudesi—still in existence—contain an entry to the effect that ten florins of gold should be handed over to Boccaccio, that he might convey it to "Sister Beatrice, daughter of Dante Alighieri, a nun in the monastery of St. Stephen of the Olives at Ravenna."

We have no knowledge of the motive that inspired the presentation of this gift, but in any case it seems certain that the mission of Boccaccio was followed by one very important result. The sight of the lonely tomb in the little city on the shores of the Adriatic, and the words he exchanged with the daughter of him who lay there, apparently furnished him with the impulse he needed to undertake the composition of the Life of Dante, the earliest and most valuable biography of the Poet that we possess. In this work he did not spare the Florentines, "quell' ingrato popolo maligno,"[1] but told them the truth in the plainest language, saying that "for no rightful cause,

[1] *Inf.* xv. 61.

for no offence or crime, was the Poet driven into irrevocable exile," urging them in the same breath to demand from the Ravennese the mortal remains of Dante, that they might find sepulchre in the City of his birth.

In the year 1373 Florence appears to have first awakened to a sense of the glory of her Divine Poet, and after her awakening she at once manifested a desire to associate herself with the honour that was accorded to him wherever the Italian tongue was spoken. The passage of more than half a century had of necessity modified the bitterness of party feeling, and his fellow-citizens remembered Dante more in the character of a writer than that of a politician. They no longer wished to be behindhand in their appreciation of his great work, and accordingly a petition bearing many signatures was sent to the Signoria, asking for the appointment of a lecturer who should publicly read and expound "the book which is popularly called *El Dante*, otherwise the *Divina Commedia*. The question of the lectureship was put to the vote in the great assembly of the Commune, and carried by an overwhelming majority, only nineteen of the members out of a total of two hundred and five being averse to it, and a "Cathedra

Dantesca," with a salary of one hundred gold florins, free of taxes, was immediately established.

The occupancy of this chair was offered to Boccaccio, and in spite of failing health he gladly accepted it, delivering a series of addresses in the Church of the Badia, on the first sixteen Cantos of the *Inferno*, the substance of which was afterwards given to the world in the form of a commentary. After his death, which took place in 1375, he was succeeded in this appointment by Filippo Villani, a nephew of the famous Chronicler, and himself the writer of a short life of Dante, composed in the Latin language.

Twenty-three years later, the City, having at last fully come to herself, decreed the erection of a monument to Dante in the Duomo, and then, unwilling that it should be a mere cenotaph, begged ineffectually of the Ravennese "for the metaphorical ashes of the man, of whom she had threatened to make literal cinders"[1] if he had ventured within her jurisdiction when still alive. In 1429 she made another attempt, addressing a petition to Ostasio Polentani, Lord of Ravenna, but again without success, the Signore being firm in his refusal

[1] Lowell.

to give up to the Florentines the custody of the sacred dust. Meanwhile public expositions of the *Divina Commedia* were frequently given in the different churches of Florence, and in 1432, after the delivery by a Friar, Antonio Neri by name, of a remarkable series of these expositions, a portrait of the Poet was placed in the Duomo, with an inscription, urging the recovery of his bones.

The year 1444 witnessed the death of the well-known humanist, Leonardo Bruni, the author of a life of Dante written in the vernacular, and a true lover both of him and his works. It fell to his lot, as he himself tells us, to entertain hospitably Leonardo Alighieri, Dante's grandson, and to show him the home of his ancestors, and furnish him with many particulars concerning them, on the occasion of a visit he paid to their native City. The tomb of this kindly Dantist may be seen in the south aisle of Santa Croce—his recumbent figure lying below an image of the Madonna and Child, sculptured by Bernardo Rossellino.

It is on the wall of the north aisle of the Duomo that the reverence and admiration that the Florentines of the fifteenth century felt for their illustrious exile is most clearly written.

Photo: Alinari.

PAINTING OF DANTE, BY DOMENICO DI MICHELINO. DUOMO.

Here we behold a picture painted on wood by Domenico di Michelino, a pupil of Fra Angelico, in the year 1465, by command of the Signoria, showing Dante in the act of expounding the *Divina Commedia.* The Poet is in a standing position, laurel crowned, holding a book in his left hand, and with his right hand extended as if to emphasize his words. Behind him is the Mount of Purgatory, with the Angel of St. Peter at the Gate, and little naked figures running round the different cornices by which it is encircled. On one side of him is the entrance to the Inferno, and on the other a conventional view of Florence, as it appeared at the time of the execution of the painting. It is thought that the design for the central figure of this composition was drawn by Alessio Baldovinetti, and that it may have been a reproduction of that likeness of the Poet by Giotto which was once on the destroyed screen in the nave of Santa Croce, and is now unfortunately lost. Volkman says of this painting that "it is the sole picture of an early time that gives an individual portrait of Dante, together with scenes from his work." The inscription composed by Politian was added five years later.

We have now reached the most brilliant period of the Italian Renaissance, the years

when Lorenzo de' Medici, the "Magnificent," as he was justly termed, held the supreme power in Florence. It was not unnatural that, in an age when the literature of the past was so highly esteemed, the minds of men should have turned back to the Poet of an earlier day, one of the first of the Florentines to be influenced by the "new learning," the precious treasure bequeathed by ancient Greece and Rome to the modern world. The question of the place of his burial was once more mooted, and in 1476 the Venetian Ambassador was approached in the hope that the Sister Republic would be induced to coerce Ravenna, now in a position of subjection to herself, into the surrender of the body of Dante. This application produced no result, and Florence waited until the year 1519, when the hour seemed peculiarly propitious for the accomplishment of her desire.

The reigning Pope, Leo X., was a member of the house of the Medici, and a petition drawn up by the Medicean Academy, and signed by many influential citizens, was forwarded to him, asking for permission to bring back the remains of the Poet that they might be laid in his own City. The Pope gladly gave his sanction; envoys were sent from Florence. The Ravennese dared

not openly disobey the Pontiff's mandate; the tomb was opened, and found *empty!* This strange circumstance was, as far as possible, kept secret, but the Pope was informed of it in a document, in which the truly extraordinary suggestion was made that the body of Dante had rejoined his soul on the other side of the veil. The sudden death of Leo X. shortly afterwards was probably the reason why no adequate inquiry ever took place into this very curious state of affairs, and it remained a mystery for more than three centuries, when at last, almost in our own day and generation, it was finally explained, the bones being discovered in the neighbouring chapel of Braccioforte, where they had been hidden by the Franciscan Friars.

There is the more reason to regret the failure of this particular attempt, because Michael Angelo, who was one of the signatories to the papal petition, wrote across it, in his own handwriting, an offer to "make a worthy sepulchre for the Divine Poet," and none but the Titan among sculptors could have fittingly carried out so great a purpose. The "terrible" hands that hewed out of the marble the solemn figures in the dim sacristy of San Lorenzo, for the graves of two insignificant

members of the Medicean family, would surely have been guided by an even higher measure of inspiration if they had been employed on what would have been to their owner a veritable labour of love—the execution of a memorial erected by Florence Repentant to the memory of the Author of the *Divina Commedia.*

During the century and a half that the Florentines were vainly endeavouring to possess themselves of the remains of their Poet there is abundant testimony to the steady growth of his fame within the bounds of the City that had rejected him. His chief work was copied and re-copied for the benefit of the learned, no man with any pretence at culture being unwilling to remain ignorant of the first poem of any note composed in the "Lingua volgare," the common tongue of Tuscany. These transcriptions, many of which are preserved in the public libraries of Florence, are of special interest, more particularly when, as was often the case, the labours of the scribe were supplemented by those of the illuminator. The quaint miniatures with which the vellum is then adorned give us an idea of the manner in which artists who were almost contemporaries of Dante, regarded the *Divina Commedia*, and the opening initial of the *Inferno* usually

contains a tiny likeness of the Poet himself, engaged in the task that had made him "lean"[1] for so many years.

Printed books, however beautiful they may be, lack the note of individuality that belongs of right to manuscripts, and a feeling that such was the case may be one reason why Florence was so far behind the rest of Italy in the production of her "Editio Princeps" of the *Commedia*. It was not until 1481 that it appeared, nine earlier editions having already been sent out from the presses of other cities; but this tardiness was at least partly atoned for by the fact that the text was accompanied by a commentary written by Cristophoro Landino, and illustrated by woodcuts said to have been adapted from the designs of Sandro Botticelli. Other editions followed in due course of time, and thus the poem was brought within reach of the poorer class of scholars, to whom it must have been denied as long as it remained solely in manuscript.

One printed copy, as we know, more than rivalled in interest the most elaborate hand-written volume, for on the wide margins thereof Michael Angelo—to whom it belonged—drew a series of illustrative sketches in pen and ink.

[1] *Par.* xxv. 3.

This precious treasure became in after years the property of Antonio Montanti, a sculptor, and was lost at sea off Civitavecchia with the rest of his goods, which were in course of removal from Florence to Rome—an irreparable misfortune to the world at large, as well as to the immediate owner.

A graceful action performed by the newly established Council of the Eight connects the name of Savonarola with that of a descendant of Dante. By a provision of this Council, June 8, 1495, it was enacted that consent should be given to a request of Messer Dante Alighieri, great grandson of the Poet, to be relieved from the payment of certain taxes that prevented him from returning to Florence. The document concludes as follows: "deeming it well to give some proof of gratitude to the posterity of the Poet, who is so great an ornament to this City, we do hereby provide that the said Messer Dante be held exempt from every fine and penalty."

For three centuries after the fall of the Republic in 1520, the City held her peace, paid no further honours to the memory of Dante, and sent no more embassies to the inhabitants of Ravenna. The Medicean Grand

Photo: Alinari.

MONUMENT TO DANTE. SANTA CROCE.

Dukes, the degenerate offspring of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, grasped for two hundred years the reins of government in Florence, the last ruling member of this once famous family being succeeded by the earliest Grand Duke of the House of Lorraine. The succession of these latter princelets was interrupted for a short time by the Napoleonic régime, when the beautiful City of the Lily became the capital of the new kingdom of Etruria, and immediately after their restoration in 1815, the first stirrings of the "Risorgimento" began to make themselves felt.

Florence had wearied of the yoke of the foreigner, but the hour had not yet come when she could openly rebel, though great secret discontent prevailed within her walls. In her time of darkness and almost of despair, her citizens bethought themselves once more of Dante Alighieri, that lover of freedom, who had passed such scathing censures on the tyrants of his own day, and had highly commended the action of Cato in preferring death to the loss of liberty. As a token of her renewed interest in the Poet, a monument to him, the cost of which was defrayed by public subscription, was, in the year 1829 set up in the south aisle of Santa Croce, the recognized

shrine of Florentine genius. The design was entrusted to a very mediocre sculptor, Stefano Ricci, and leaves much to be desired from the artistic standpoint. Dante is shown seated on a sarcophagus, untenanted, alas! while the Muse of Poetry greets him with uplifted hand, and Italy bewails his loss. About the same time a full-sized statue of him was placed in one of the niches of the Loggia of the Uffizi, a not unpleasing figure, sculptured by Demi, holding his great work, "the Bible of the Italian unitary ideal," in one hand, while the other rests upon a lyre.

We have witnessed act after act in that drama of reconciliation by which Dante and Florence were brought together once more after the lapse of so many centuries, and nothing now remains to be recorded except the celebration of the Sexcentenario of the birth of the Poet, an anniversary that fell in a fortunate hour, his birthplace having just become the Capital of United Italy. As a preliminary to the commemoration of so great an event, the Municipio of the City on May the seventh, 1864, sent Il Carobbi, the Gonfalonière of that year, on an embassy to the Municipio of Ravenna, once more praying for the restoration of his bones. The petitioners stated in the document

carried by the Gonfalonière that "they desired to repair the wrong done by their ancestors, and the disastrous treatment that Dante had received at their hands." The embassy was again unavailing, the Ravennese courteously but firmly refusing to grant the petition, saying, as an excuse for their refusal, that "the deposit of the sacred remains of Dante Alighieri in Ravenna could no longer be looked upon as a perpetuation of his exile, as all the cities of Italy were now united in one enduring bond under one rule."

With this piece of logic, so unsatisfactory to themselves, the Florentines had perforce to be content, and preparations for the celebration of the Sexcentenario went on apace, until by the middle of May, 1865, the whole City was decked and ready for the festival. The streets were adorned with wreaths, bright hangings, and flags, and inscribed tablets were affixed in the different buildings associated with the history of the Poet. Enormous crowds, gathered from far and near, scholars and the unlearned, nobles and contadini, flocked into Florence; concerts and banquets took place, and a "Mostra Dantesca," an exhibition of pictures, manuscripts, and books, was opened in the Palace of the Podestà.

The chief centre of interest lay in Piazza Santa Croce, which was decorated with representations of the life of Dante, together with portraits of his biographers and commentators, and thither on May the fifteenth, his traditional birthday, a long procession wended its way. In the centre of the Piazza stood the National Monument, a high pedestal enriched with bas-reliefs of incidents from the *Commedia*, crowned by a figure of the Poet, sculptured by Enrico Pazzi of Ravenna, and bearing the simple inscription—

"A DANTE ALIGHIERI
L'ITALIA
MDCCCLXV."

This monument was solemnly unveiled in the presence of King Vittore Emmanuele, the representatives of fifty-nine provinces of Italy, and innumerable spectators, the vast assembly shouting as with one voice the words "Onorate l'altissimo Poeta."[1]

The tale is told, there is no more to say; Florence has done all that lay in her power to wipe out the shame of centuries; she and her exile are again one, as they were in the happy years that find their memorial in the

[1] *Inf.* iv. 80.

Photo : Alinari.

NATIONAL MONUMENT TO DANTE. PIAZZA SANTA CROCE.

Vita Nuova, the "New Life" of the Poet. The days of his banishment are for ever ended, and the prophecy that he put into the mouth of "Ser Brunetto" is at length fulfilled; "His star,"[1] nobly followed in the days of his probation, has indeed brought him into a "glorious haven," the very heart of the City that he loved.

[1] *Inf.* xv. 55.

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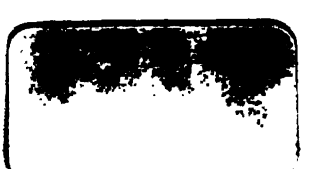
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